

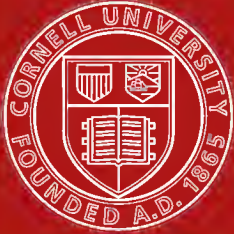
CORNELL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY



3 1924 101 105 033

CORNELL
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY





Cornell University
Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.



THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE

VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,

DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

WITH

INTRODUCTIONS

BY THE

VEN. ARCHDEACON F. W. FARRAR, D.D., F.R.S.—RIGHT REV. H. COTTERILL, D.D.,
F.R.S.E.—VERY REV. PRINCIPAL J. TULLOCH, D.D.—REV. CANON G.
RAWLINSON, M.A.—REV. A. PLUMMER, M.A., D.D.

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY

NEW YORK AND TORONTO.

265

THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE

REV. CANON H. D. M. SPENCE, M.A.,

VICAR AND RURAL DEAN OF ST. PANCRAS, AND EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD
BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL;

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

ST. MARK.

Exposition

By VERY REV. E. BICKERSTETH, D.D.,

DEAN OF LICHFIELD.

Homiletics

By REV. PROF. J. R. THOMSON, M.A.

Homilies by Various Authors.

REV. A. ROWLAND, B.A., LL.B.

REV. PROF. J. J. GIVEN, M.A.

REV. A. F. MUIR, M.A.

REV. PROF. E. JOHNSON, M.A.

REV. B. GREEN.

VOL. I

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY

NEW YORK AND TORONTO.

360522B

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK.

INTRODUCTION.

THE four living creatures mentioned in Ezekiel (i. 10), and which reappear in a modified form in the Apocalypse of St. John (iv. 7), are interpreted by very many Christian writers to signify the fourfold Gospel, the four faces representing the four evangelists. The face of a *man* is supposed to denote St. Matthew, who describes the actions of our Lord more especially as to his human nature. The face of an *eagle* is understood to indicate St. John, who soars at once into the highest heavens, and commences his Gospel with that magnificent declaration, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Then the face of an *ox* symbolizes St. Luke, who commences his narrative with the priesthood of Zacharias. While, lastly, the face of a *lion* represents St. Mark, because he opens his Gospel with the trumpet voice, like the roaring of a lion, the loud call of the Baptist to repentance. These four carried the chariot of the gospel throughout the world, and subdued the nations to the obedience of Christ, the mighty Conqueror.

Other interesting interpretations have been suggested for these symbols; amongst them "the whole animate creation," the number four being understood to symbolize the material world, as the number three represents the Divine Being. But the former interpretation is largely supported by early Christian antiquity, and has been made familiar to us through the ages past in the representations of ancient art, both sculpture and painting.

If early testimony is to have its due weight, St. Mark wrote his Gospel in Greek, and at Rome, and apparently for Gentiles, certainly not exclusively, or in the first instance, for Jews. There are explanations given here and there in his Gospel which would be superfluous if it were written only for Jews. Jordan, when he first mentions it, is called "the river Jordan." It is true that many good authorities read "the river Jordan" in St. Matthew (iii. 6); but this may have been introduced to make his Gospel more clear to those who were unacquainted with the geography of Palestine. "John's disciples and the Pharisees used to fast" (*ἡσαν νηστεύοντες*); literally, "were fasting." This would have been unnecessary information for Jews. "The time of figs was not yet." Every inhabitant of Palestine would have known this. St. Mark alone preserves those words

of our Lord, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath," (oh. ii. 27)—a great principle, belonging to all nations alike. He alone quotes the words (xi. 17), "of all nations," literally (*πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσιν*), "for all the nations," in connection with our Lord's cleansing of the temple.

Early writers speak of St. Mark as the "interpreter" of St. Peter; by which expression it seems to be meant that he put down in writing, what he had heard orally from St. Peter, the things relating to the life of our Lord. It seems also plain that he must have had access to St. Matthew's Gospel. But he was not a mere copyist. He was an independent witness. He often supplies a sentence, detailing some little incident which he could only have received from an eye-witness, and which forms an additional link to the narrative, explaining something which had been left obscure, and filling up the picture. If we imagine St. Mark with St. Matthew's Gospel at hand, and with copious memoranda of the observations and graphic descriptions of St. Peter, together with his own peculiar gifts as a writer, and the unerring guidance of the Holy Spirit, we seem to see at once the sources of St. Mark's Gospel.

St. Mark's Gospel is the shortest of all the four Gospels; and yet there is a unity about it which, as has been well said, "quite excludes the notion that it is either a mere compendium of some richer, or an expansion of some briefer, Gospel" ('Speaker's Commentary'). The writer avails himself of all the information that he can procure; at the same time, he is an independent witness, giving, as all the sacred writers are permitted to do, the colouring of his own mind, his own "setting," so to speak, to those great truths and facts which the Holy Ghost moved him to communicate. His frequent use of the present for the aorist; his constant repetition of the word *εὐθείας*, "straightway" (carefully marked in the new Revision by the employment of the same English synonym, "straightway," throughout); his employment of diminutives, and his introduction of little details, imparting freshness and light to the whole narrative;—all these and many other circumstances give to St. Mark's Gospel a character of its own, distinct from, and yet in harmony with, the rest. It is a compendium of our blessed Lord's life upon earth; but it is a compendium with a peculiar richness and originality which differences it off from the other Gospels, making us feel that if we were called upon to part with any one of the four, we certainly could not spare that of St. Mark.

Another thought which is impressed upon us by the study of this Gospel is the shortness of the time within which the amazing mystery of our redemption was actually wrought out, and the marvellous activity of the earthly life of the Son of God. St. Mark's narrative, giving for the most part the salient facts and events, without the discourses and parables which enrich the other Gospels, presents us with a comprehensive conspectus, which is of special use in its relation to the other Gospels, in which we are led rather to dwell upon the details, and to linger over the Divine words, instructive as they are, until we almost lose sight of the grand outline

of the history. St. Mark, by the structure of his narrative, helps us more readily to grasp the whole of the sublime and impressive record.

Take, for example, St. Mark's account of our Lord's ministry in Galilee. How it revolves around the familiar Lake of Gennesaret! A series of striking miracles at Capernaum and in that neighbourhood, commencing with the casting out of the "unclean spirit," excites the attention of the whole Jewish population, and exalts the fame of Jesus even amongst the heathen beyond the Jewish borders, so that they flock to him from every quarter. But the miracles were only intended to challenge attention to the words of Jesus; and therefore we find him continually preaching to the dense masses on the seashore, until they thronged him so that he was obliged to direct a boat to be always in attendance upon him, into which he might retreat, and which he might use as his pulpit when the pressure of the crowd became inconveniently great. Then there is the frequent crossing over the lake to and fro, from west to east, and back from east to west—the sea itself ministering to him, gathering into a storm at his bidding, and at his bidding becoming still. Then there are the miracles and the preaching on this side and on that, amongst a Jewish population here and a Gentile population there. And then there is the jealousy of the chief priests and scribes, sent purposely from Jerusalem to watch him, and to find grounds for accusation against him, while the mass of the people recognize him as the great Prophet that should come into the world. A few short chapters suffice to exhibit all this to us, and to present us with a striking and vivid illustration of the fulfilment of the prophecy quoted by St. Matthew (iv. 15, 16): "The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthali, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."

The connection of St. Peter with this Gospel has already been noticed; and, assuming the correctness of the supposition that St. Mark, in writing his Gospel, was to a great extent the "interpreter" of St. Peter, it is interesting to observe how the internal evidence supplied by this Gospel tends to confirm this view. Instead of being put prominently forward, as in the other Gospels, in this the Apostle Peter falls as much as possible into the background. When his name first occurs, it appears as Simon. It is not until the third chapter that he is spoken of as Peter, and then only in the simplest terms: "Simon he surnamed Peter" (ch. iii. 16). In the eighth chapter, while our Lord's severe rebuke of him is recorded, there is no mention of the noble confession which he had made just before. In the fourteenth chapter, while we are informed that our Lord sent two of his disciples to prepare the Passover, the names of the two are not given, although we know from another evangelist that they were Peter and John. In the same chapter, when they were in the Garden of Gethsemane, we read that our Lord singles out Peter as one who was heavy with sleep, and applies his remonstrance specially to him, addressing him as Simon,

and saying, "Simon, sleepest thou?" The particulars of this apostle's denial of Christ are, as we might expect, given also with great minuteness. The only other notice that we find of him is that message sent to him by the angel after our Lord's resurrection, "Go tell his disciples and Peter, He goeth before you into Galilee"—a message which, while it would recall to him his sin, would also assure him of his forgiveness. Now, all this manifestly confirms the ancient traditions that St. Peter influenced the compilation of this Gospel. He had said (2 Pet. i. 15), "Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance"—a sentence which shows his great anxiety that there should be a trustworthy record preserved for all future ages from the lips and pens of those who were eye-witnesses of Christ's majesty. Thus all that we read leads us to the conclusion that we have in St. Mark a faithful exponent of what St. Peter heard and saw and communicated to him; so that if we wanted another title for this Gospel, we might call it "The Gospel according to St. Peter."

I. THE LIFE OF ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST.

The name of Mark is by some supposed to be derived from the Latin "marous," a hammer; not "marcellus," a little hammer, but "marcus," a strong hammer, able to crush the flinty rock, and thus indicative of the spiritual power wielded by the evangelist, and enabling him to break the stony hearts of the Gentiles, and to rouse them to penitence and faith and a holy life. The præ-nomen Marcus was in frequent use amongst the Romans, and often given to those who were the firstborn. Cicero was called Marcus Tullius Cicero, because he was the firstborn of his family. So St. Mark was in a spiritual sense the firstborn and well-beloved of St. Peter. "The Church that is at Babylon [literally, ἡ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι, 'she that is in Babylon'], elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son" (1 Pet. v. 13). St. Mark drew his spirit and his ardour from St. Peter. St. Peter, as his father in Christ Jesus, impressed his wisdom and holiness upon him.

Who, then, was St. Mark? He appears to have been a Hebrew by nation, and of the tribe of Levi. Bede says that he was a priest after the order of Aaron. There is very good reason to believe (although Grotius, Cornelius à Lapide, and others, think differently) that he is the same person who is mentioned in the Acts (xii. 12, 25) as "John whose surname is Mark." John was his original Jewish name; and Mark, his Roman prefix, was added afterwards, and gradually superseded the other name. We can trace the process of the change very clearly in the Acts and in the Epistles. We find John and John Mark in the earlier part of the Acts; but in Acts xv. 39 John disappears altogether, and in the Epistles he is always called Mark. His surname appears to have gradually taken the place of his other name, just as Paul takes the place of Saul. Then further we find him associated with St. Peter; which furnishes another evidence of his identity,

as also does the fact that he was sister's son, or cousin (*ἀνεψιός*) to Barnabas, who was himself on terms of close fellowship with St. Peter. Moreover, the general consensus of the early Church identifies John Mark with the writer of this Gospel, which Eusebius informs us was written under the eye of St. Peter. The substitution of a Roman name for his family Jewish name was probably intentional, and designed to indicate his entrance upon a new life, and to prepare him for intercourse with Gentiles, especially Romans.

Assuming, then, that "John whose surname was Mark" was the writer of this Gospel, we have the following particulars respecting him:—He was the son of a certain Mary who dwelt in Jerusalem. She appears to have been well known, and to have been in a good position. Her house was open to the friends and disciples of our Lord. It is possible that hers may have been the house where our Lord "kept the Passover" with his disciples on the night of his betrayal; perhaps the house where the disciples were gathered together on the evening of the Resurrection; perhaps the house where they received the miraculous gifts on the day of Pentecost. It was certainly the house to which Peter betook himself when he was delivered out of prison; certainly the first great centre of Christian worship in Jerusalem after our Lord's ascension, and the site of the first Christian church in that city. It is probable that it was to the sacred intercourse of that home that John Mark owed his conversion, which may very probably have been delayed in consequence of his having been by birth of the family of the Jewish priesthood. It is more than probable that St. Mark, in ch. xiv. 51, 52, may have been relating what happened to himself. All the details fit in with this supposition. The action corresponds with what we know of his character, which appears to have been warm-hearted and earnest, but timid and impulsive. Moreover, the linen cloth, or *sindon*, cast about his body, answers to his position and circumstances. It would not have been worn by a person in very humble life. Indeed, nothing but the name is wanting to complete the evidence of the identity of "John whose surname was Mark" with Mark the writer of this Gospel. It will be remembered that St. John in his Gospel evidently speaks of himself more than once without mentioning his name, calling himself "another disciple." St. Mark, if the hypothesis be correct, speaks of himself as "a young man," probably because he was not yet a disciple.

We may assume, then, that the events of that terrible night and of the following day, followed by the great event of the Resurrection, so wrought upon the mind of John Mark, that they brought him to a full acceptance of Christ and his salvation. Hence we are not surprised to find that he was chosen at an early period in the history of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts xiii. 5) to accompany Paul and Barnabas as their minister, or attendant (*ὑπηρέτης*), on their first missionary journey. But we next read of him that when they reached Perga, in Pamphylia (Acts xiii. 13), John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. The sacred narrative does not

give the reason for this defection. Pamphylia was a wild, rough district, and St. Paul and his companions may have encountered some dangers before reaching Perga, if Strabo's account of the Pamphylians is to be relied upon. Then John Mark may have felt a longing for his mother's home at Jerusalem; and some good opportunity for leaving them may have offered itself to him at Perga, which was not far from the sea. At all events, it is consistent with what we know of his character that he should have suddenly determined to leave the apostles. However, if any unworthy motive influenced him, he soon recovered himself; for not long after, we read of his having been again associated, not indeed with Paul, but with Barnabas, his cousin, in missionary labour. Indeed, Mark was the cause of a temporary estrangement between Paul and Barnabas, although, in the providence of him who is ever bringing good out of evil, this estrangement led to a still wider diffusion of the gospel.

The next notice that we have of Mark is in St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, written by him from Rome during his first imprisonment. At the close of that letter St. Paul writes (Col. iv. 10), "There saluteth you, . . . Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him." It is probable that these Christians at Colosse had heard of the temporary separation of Paul and Barnabas, and of its cause; and if so, there is something very pathetic in this allusion to Mark in this Epistle. It is as though the apostle said, "You may have heard of the separation between Barnabas and myself on account of Mark. You will therefore now rejoice to know that Mark is with me, and a comfort to me, and that he sends you Christian greetings by my hand. I have already given you directions concerning him: if he come unto you, receive him." (See Wordsworth, *in loc.*)

Nor is this all. Later on, in his Second Epistle to Timothy, written during his second imprisonment at Rome, St. Paul (iv. 11) desires his own son in the faith, Timothy, to come to him; and he adds, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry;" literally, "he is useful to me for ministering" (ἔστι γάρ μοι εὐχρηστος εἰς διακονίαν). It would seem as though these words had reference rather to Mark's useful qualities as an attendant (ὑπηρέτης), though possibly the higher service may be included. This is the latest notice that we have of Mark in the New Testament. But St. Peter, writing from Babylon, perhaps about five or six years before St. Paul sent this message to Timothy, alludes to Mark as having been with him there at that time, and calls him, "Marcus my son," as has already been noticed.

It will be seen, then, from hence that Mark had close and intimate relations with both St. Peter and St. Paul; and that he was with the one apostle at Babylon, and with the other at Rome. I am quite unable to accept the view that St. Peter, when mentioning Babylon, is referring mystically to Rome. This is not the place in which to look for figurative language. Nor is there anything remarkable in St. Peter, the apostle of

the circumcision, having gone to Babylon, where we know there was a large colony of Jews, or in his having been accompanied thither by Mark himself, also a Jew of the family of Aaron. The whole is consistent with the idea that Mark wrote his Gospel under the direction of St. Peter. Ancient writers, as Irenæus, Tertullian, St. Jerome, and others, with one consent make him the interpreter of St. Peter. Eusebius, quoting from Papias, says, "Mark, being the interpreter of St. Peter, wrote down exactly whatever things he remembered, yet not in the order in which Christ either spoke or did them; for he was neither a hearer nor a follower of our Lord, but he was afterwards a follower of St. Peter." St. Jerome says, "St. Mark, the interpreter of the Apostle St. Peter, and the first bishop of the Church of Alexandria, related what things he heard his master preaching, rather according to the truth of the facts, than according to the order of the things that were done."

St. Augustine calls Mark the "breviator" of St. Matthew, not because he made an abridgment of St. Matthew's Gospel, but because he relates more briefly, according to what he had received from St. Peter, those things which St. Matthew relates more at length.

According to the testimony of St. Jerome, he wrote a short Gospel at Rome at the request of the brethren there; and St. Peter, when he had heard it, approved of it, and appointed it to be read in the churches by his authority. St. Jerome says, further, that St. Mark took this Gospel and went into Egypt; and, being the first preacher of Christ at Alexandria, established a Church with so much moderation of doctrine and of life, that he constrained all those who had opposed Christ to follow his example. Eusebius states that he became the first bishop of that Church, and that the catechetical school at Alexandria was founded under his authority. It is further stated that he ultimately died a martyr's death at Alexandria. But the evidence upon this latter point is not sufficiently trustworthy.

Tradition says that the body of St. Mark was translated by certain merchants from Alexandria to Venice, A.D. 827, where he was much honoured. The Venetian Senate adopted the emblem of St. Mark—the lion—for their crest; and when they directed anything to be done, they affirmed that it was by the order of St. Mark.

II. OBSERVATIONS ON THE GENUINENESS AND AUTHENTICITY OF THE LAST TWELVE VERSES OF ST. MARK'S GOSPEL.

These verses have been admitted by the Revisers of 1881 into the text, but with a space between ver. 8 and ver. 9, to show that they have received them with some degree of caution and reserve, and not without having carefully weighed the evidence on both sides. The most important features in the evidence are the following:—

1. *The Evidence of Manuscripts.*

(1) *Of the Uncial Manuscripts.* The two oldest, namely, the *Sinaitic* and the *Vatican*, omit the whole passage, but under different conditions. The *Sinaitic* omits the passage absolutely. The *Vatican* omits it, but with a space left blank between the eighth verse of Mark xvi., and the beginning of St. Luke, just sufficient for its insertion; as though the writer of the manuscript, hesitating whether to omit or to insert the verses, thought it safest to leave a space for them.

But there is another and much later Uncial Manuscript (L), of about the eighth century. Of this manuscript it may be said that, although some four centuries later, it bears a strong family resemblance to the *Sinaitic* and the *Vatican*. This manuscript does not omit the passage, but it interpolates between it and the eighth verse an apocryphal addition, and then goes on with ver. 9. This addition is given at p. 538, second edition, of Dr. Scrivener's admirable work on the '*Criticism of the New Testament.*'

It should be added here that there is a strong resemblance between the *Sinaitic* and *Vatican* manuscripts; so that practically the evidential value of these three manuscripts amounts to little more than one authority.

With these three exceptions, all the Uncial Manuscripts maintain the twelve verses in their integrity.

(2) *The Cursive Manuscripts.* The evidence of the *Cursives* is unanimous in favour of the disputed verses. It is true that some mark the passage as one of which the genuineness had been disputed. But against this there has to be set the fact that the verses are retained in all but two old manuscripts, and those two in all probability not independent. It has been clearly shown by Dean Burgon that the verses were read in the public services of the Church in the fourth century, and probably much earlier, as shown by the ancient *Evangelistaria*.

2. *Evidence of Ancient Versions.*

The most ancient versions, both of the Eastern and of the Western Churches, without a single exception, recognize this passage. Of the Eastern versions the evidence is very remarkable. The *Peshito Syriac*, which dates from the second century, bears witness to its genuineness; so does the *Philoxenian*; while the *Curetonian Syriac*, also very ancient, far earlier than the *Sinaitic* or *Vatican* manuscripts, bears a very singular testimony. In the only extant copy of that version, the Gospel of St. Mark is wanting, with the exception of one fragment only, and that fragment contains the last four of these disputed verses. The *Coptic* versions also recognize the passage.

The same may be said of the versions of the Western Church. The earlier version of the *Vulgate*, called the *Old Italic*, has it. Jerome, who used the best manuscript of the *Old Italic* when he prepared his *Vulgate*, felt himself obliged to admit this disputed passage, although he did not scruple

to allege the objections to its reception, which were the same as those urged by Eusebius. The Gothic Version of Ulphilas (fourth century) has the passage from ver. 8 to ver. 12.

3. Evidence of the Early Fathers.

There are some expressions in the 'Shepherd of Hermas,' written in all probability not later than the middle of the second century, which are evidently taken from St. Mark (xvi. 16).

Justin Martyr (about A.D. 160) quotes the last two verses.

The evidence of Irenæus (A.D. 177) is yet more striking. In one of his books ('Adv. Hær.,' iii. 10) he quotes the beginning and the end of St. Mark's Gospel in the same passage, in the latter part of which he says, "But in the end of his Gospel Mark saith, 'And the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God,' confirming what was said by the prophet, 'The Lord saith unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.'"

This evidence of Irenæus is conclusive as to the fact that in his time there was no doubt as to the genuineness and authenticity of the passage in Asia Minor, in Gaul, or in Italy.

There yet remains the question of *internal evidence*.

Now, to begin with. If it is assumed that St. Mark's Gospel ended at the close of ver. 8, the abruptness of the conclusion is very striking in the English, and still more so in the Greek (*ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ*). It seems scarcely possible to suppose that it could have ended here. Renan says on this point, "On ne peut guère admettre que le texte primitif finit d'une manière aussi abrupte."

On the other hand, having regard to the mode in which St. Mark opens his Gospel, we might suppose that he would condense at the close as he condenses at the beginning. The first year of our Lord's ministry is disposed of very briefly; we might, therefore, expect a rapid and compendious conclusion. Two or three important evidences of our Lord's resurrection are concisely stated; then, without any break, but where the reader must supply an interval, he is transported into Galilee. St. Mark had already recorded the words of Christ (xiv. 28), "But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee." How natural, therefore, that he should refer in some way to our Lord's presence in Galilee after his resurrection; which he does in the most effective manner by quoting the words which St. Matthew (xxvii. 16, etc.) tells us were spoken by him in Galilee. Then another stride from Galilee to Bethany, to the last earthly scene of all—the Ascension. The whole is eminently characteristic of St. Mark. His Gospel ends, as we might expect it to end, from the character of its beginning. On the whole, the evidence as to the genuineness and authenticity of this passage seems irresistible.

III. ANALYSIS OF CONTENTS OF ST. MARK'S GOSPEL.

CH. I.

- 1—8 Preaching of John the Baptist.
- 9—11 Baptism of Jesus by John.
- 12, 13 Temptation of our Lord in the wilderness.
- 14, 15 Commencement of our Lord's public ministry.
- 16—18 Call of Andrew and Simon.
- 19, 20 Call of James and John, sons of Zebedee.
- 21, 22 Our Lord preaches in the synagogue at Capernaum.
- 23—28 The casting out of the unclean spirit in the synagogue.
- 29—34 The healing of Simon's wife's mother, and many others.
- 35—37 Retirement of our Lord for prayer.
- 38, 39 Missionary circuit throughout Galilee.
- 40—45 Healing of a leper.

CH. II.

- 1—12 Christ heals the paralytic at Capernaum.
- 13—17 The call of Levi.
- 18—22 Discourse with the Pharisees about fasting.
- 23—28 The disciples pluck the ears of corn on the sabbath.

CH. III.

- 1—6 The healing of the man whose hand was withered. The malice of the Pharisees and Herodians.
- 7—12 Jesus withdraws to the sea, followed by a great multitude. A little boat waits upon him because of the crowd. He performs many miracles.
- 13—19 Jesus goes into the mountain, and there appoints the twelve to be his apostles.
- 20—30 Jesus returns to Capernaum. He is again thronged by a multitude. His friends come to lay hold of him. His miracles are ascribed to Beelzebub by his enemies. He warns them of the danger of resisting the Holy Spirit.
- 31—35 His mother and his brethren come seeking him.

CH. IV.

- 1—20 The parable of the sower, and its explanation.
- 21—25 Further discourse on the responsibility of hearing.
- 26—29 Parable of the seed growing secretly.
- 30—34 Parable of the grain of mustard seed.
- 35—41 Our Lord stills the tempest, as he crosses the sea to the country of the Gerasenes.

CH. V.

- 1—20 On landing on the eastern coast, our Lord is met by a man who is possessed. Our Lord heals him, and suffers the dispossessed evil spirits to enter into a herd of swine.
- 21—24 Our Lord crosses over again to the western shore, where he is met by Jairus, who seeks healing for his little daughter.
- 25—34 On his way to the house of Jairus he heals a woman with an issue of blood.
- 35—43 He enters the house of Jairus, and raises to life again his daughter now dead.

CH. VI.

- 1—6 Our Lord visits Nazareth, where, being met with unbelief, he works but few miracles. He leaves Nazareth, and makes another missionary circuit.
- 7—13 He now sends forth the twelve whom he had already appointed, and gives them instructions for their mission.
- 14—29 Herod the tetrarch hears of the fame of Jesus. The account of the death of John the Baptist.
- 30—44 Our Lord and his disciples again cross the sea, and are met by a great multitude. The five thousand are miraculously fed.
- 45—52 Our Lord walks on the sea, and stills the tempest.
- 53—56 Our Lord and his disciples reach the country of Gennesaret, where they are again met by great numbers wherever they go; and he heals many.

CH. VII.

- 1—13 The complaint of the Pharisees and scribes against the disciples for eating bread with unwashed hands. The traditions of the elders.
 14—23 The true sources of defilement.
 24—30 The Syro-phenician woman.
 31—37 The healing of the deaf and dumb.

CH. VIII.

- 1—10 The feeding of the four thousand.
 11—13 The Pharisees demand a sign from heaven.
 14—21 The leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod.
 22—26 The healing of the blind man at Bethsaida.
 27—33 Simon Peter's confession. Our Lord rebukes him.
 34—38 The value of the soul.

CH. IX.

- 1—13 The Transfiguration.
 14—29 The healing of the epileptic child.
 30—32 Our Lord predicts his sufferings and death.
 33—37 Our Lord teaches the lesson of humility.
 38—42 How the disciples were to treat those who did miracles in Christ's Name, and yet followed him not. The danger of offending any who believed in him.
 43—50 Pain preferable to sin.

CH. X.

- 1—12 On divorce.
 13—16 Little children brought to Christ.
 17—31 The rich young man.
 32—34 Christ again predicts his sufferings and death.
 35—45 The request of James and John, the sons of Zebedee.
 46—52 Blind Bartimæus receives his sight.

CH. XI.

- 1—11 The triumphant entry into Jerusalem.
 12—14 The cursing of the fig tree.
 15—19 The casting out of the profaners of the temple.
 20—26 The withered fig tree and its lessons.
 27—33 Jesus questioned by the chief priests as to his authority.

CH. XII.

- 1—12 The vineyard and the husbandmen.
 13—17 The tribute money.
 18—27 Christ reasons with the Sadducees.
 28—34 The first and great commandment.
 35—40 Christ warns the people against the scribes.
 41—44 The poor widow and her two mites.

CH. XIII.

- 1—34 The destruction of the temple and the calamities of the Jews foretold.
 35—37 Exhortation and watchfulness.

CH. XIV.

- 1—9 The anointing of our Lord at Bethany.
 10, 11 The betrayal.
 12—26 The institution of the Lord's Supper.
 27—31 Our Lord's warning to his disciples, that they would forsake him when he was delivered up.
 32—42 The agony in the garden.
 42—50 Our Lord delivered up.
 51, 52 The young man who fled naked.
 53—65 Our Lord arraigned before the high priest.
 66—72 Peter's threefold denial.

CH. XV.

- 1—15 Our Lord arraigned before Pilate, and condemned to be crucified.
- 16—36 Our Lord mocked and crucified.
- 37—39 The death of Christ.
- 40, 41 The ministering women from Galilee.
- 42—47 The burial of Christ.

CH. XVI.

- 1—8 Visit of the women to the empty tomb, and the appearance to them of an angel.
- 9—11 Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene.
- 12, 13 Christ's appearance to two others.
- 14 Christ's appearance to the eleven.
- 15—18 Christ's last command to his apostles.
- 19 Christ's ascension.
- 20 The apostles go forth to preach, and with power to work miracles in proof of their mission.

IV. LITERATURE.

Papias; Irenæus; Tertullian; Origen; Clemens Alexandrinus; Eusebius; Jerome; Gregory; Augustine; Chrysostom; Cornelius à Lapide; the 'Catena Aurea' of Thomas Aquinas; Joseph Mede; Dr. John Lightfoot; Bengel's 'Gnomon'; Dean Alford; Bishop Wordsworth; Meyer; Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine'; 'Speakers' Commentary'; Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible'; Dr. Morison's 'Commentary on St. Mark' (3rd edit.); Dr. Scrivener on the Criticism of the New Testament; Dean Burgon on the last twelve verses of St. Mark's Gospel.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1.—The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. These words mean, not the title of the book, but the commencement of the narrative; and so they depend upon what follows, namely, "as it is written" (*καθὼς* for *ὡς*), "even as it is written." The words "the gospel of Jesus Christ" do not signify the book which St. Mark wrote, but the evangelical teaching of Jesus Christ. St. Mark means that the gospel announcement by Jesus Christ had such a beginning as had been predicted by Isaiah and Malachi, namely, the preaching of John the Baptist, and his testimony concerning Christ, to be fully laid open by the preaching and the death of Christ. The preaching of repentance by the Baptist was the preparation and the beginning of the evangelical preaching by Christ, of whom John was the forerunner. It has been well observed that St. Matthew and St. John begin their Gospels from Christ himself; but St. Matthew from the human, and St. John from the Divine, generation of Christ. St. Mark and St. Luke commence from John the Baptist; but St. Luke from his nativity, and St. John from his preaching. The words, the Son of God, are rightly retained in the Revised Version, although they are omitted by some ancient authorities.

Ver. 2.—Even as it is written in the prophets. The weight of evidence is here in favour of the reading "in Isaiah the prophet." Three of the most important uncials (N, B, and L), and twenty-six of the cursives, have the reading "Isaiah." With these agree the Italic, Coptic, and Vulgate versions. Of the Fathers, Irenæus quotes the passage three times, twice using the words "in the prophets," and once "in Isaiah the prophet."

ST. MARK.

Generally the Fathers agree that "Isaiah" is the received reading. The more natural reading would of course be "in the prophets," inasmuch as two prophets are quoted; but in deciding upon readings, it constantly happens that the less likely reading is the more probable. In the case before us we can hardly account for "Isaiah" being exchanged for "the prophets," although we can quite understand "the prophets" being interpolated for "Isaiah." Assuming, then, that St. Mark wrote "in Isaiah the prophet," we may ask why he mentions Isaiah only and not Malachi? The answer would seem to be this, that here the voice of Isaiah is the more powerful of the two. But in real truth, Malachi says the same thing that Isaiah says; for the messenger sent from God to prepare the way of Christ was none other than John, crying aloud and preaching repentance as a preparation for the receiving of the grace of Christ. The oracle of Malachi is, in fact, contained in the oracle of Isaiah; for what Malachi predicted, the same had Isaiah more clearly and concisely predicted in other words. And this is the reason why St. Mark here, and other evangelists elsewhere, when they cite two prophets, and two or more sentences from different places in the same connection, cite them as one and the same testimony, each sentence appearing to be not so much two, as one and the same declaration differently worded.

Ver. 4.—John came, and preached the baptism of repentance. John came, that is, that he might rouse the people to repentance, and prepare them, by the outward cleansing of their bodies, to receive the cleansing of their souls through Christ's baptism, which was to follow his. So that

the baptism of John was the profession of their penitence. Hence they who were baptized with his baptism confessed their sins, and thus made the first step towards the forgiving mercy which was to be found in Christ; and the seal of his forgiveness they were to look for in his baptism, which is a baptism for the remission of sins to all true penitents and faithful believers. Christ's baptism was, therefore, the perfection and consummation of the baptism of John.

Ver. 6.—Clothed with camel's hair. This was a rough, coarse garment, characteristic of the doctrine which John taught, namely, penitence and contempt of the world. Camels abounded in Syria. And a leathern girdle about his loins. Not only the prophets, but the Jews and the inhabitants of Syria generally, used a girdle to keep the long flowing garment more closely about them, so as to leave them more free for journeying or for labour. Thus our Lord says (Luke xii. 35), "Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning." And he did eat locusts and wild honey. The insect called the locust (*ἀκρίς*) was permitted to be eaten (see Lev. xi. 22). It was used as food by the common people in Judæa. The Arabs eat them to this day; but they are considered as a common and inferior kind of food. They are a sign of temperance, poverty, and penitence. The wild honey (*μέλι ἄγριον*) was simply honey made by wild bees, either in the trees or in the hollows of the rocks. Isidorus says that it was of an inferior flavour. Both these kinds of food were consistent with the austere life and the solemn preaching of the Baptist.

Ver. 7.—The latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. This was the menial office of the slave, whose business it was to take off and put on the shoes of his master, stooping down with all humility and respect for this purpose. Thus John confessed that he was the servant of Christ, and that Christ was his Lord. In a mystical sense the shoes denote the humanity of Christ, which by its union with the Word became of the highest dignity and majesty. St. Bernard says, "The majesty of the Word was shod with the sandal of our humanity."

Ver. 8.—I baptized you with water; but he shall baptize you with [or *in*] the Holy Ghost. It is as though he said, "Christ will pour his Holy Spirit so abundantly upon you, that he will cleanse you from all your sins, and fill you with holiness and love and all his other excellent graces." Christ did this visibly on the day of Pentecost. And this he does invisibly in the sacrament of Holy Baptism, and in the rite

of Confirmation, which is the completion of the sacrament of Baptism. John baptized with water only, but Christ with water and the Holy Spirit. John baptized the body only, Christ baptizes the soul. By how much, therefore, the Holy Spirit transcends the water, and the soul excels the body, by so much is Christ's baptism more excellent than that of John, which was only preparatory and rudimentary. If it be asked why it was needful that our Lord should be baptized with John's baptism, the best answer is that given by Christ himself, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness;" it becometh us—me in receiving this baptism, and you in imparting it. Christ was sent to do the whole will of God; and as in his circumcision, so in his baptism, "he was made to be sin for us, who knew no sin."

Ver. 10.—Straightway (*εὐθέως*) coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened (*σχιζομένους*); literally, *rent asunder*. The word *εὐθέως* occurs more than forty times in this Gospel, and is so characteristic of St. Mark that, in the Revised Version, it is uniformly rendered by the same English synonym, "straightway." *He saw*. Elsewhere we are told (John i. 32) that St. John the Baptist saw this descent. The earliest heretics took advantage of this statement to represent this event as the descent of the eternal Christ upon the man Jesus for personal indwelling. Later critics have adopted this view. But it need hardly be said here that such an opinion is altogether inconsistent with all that we read elsewhere of the circumstances of the Incarnation, and of the intimate and indissoluble union of the Divine and human natures in the person of the one Christ, from the time of the "overshadowing of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Highest." The Spirit descending upon him at his baptism was not the descent of the eternal Christ upon the man Jesus. It was rather the conveyance to one who was already prepared for it as God and man, of office and authority as the great Prophet that should come into the world. St. Luke says particularly (iii. 21) that it was when Jesus had been baptized and was praying, that the Holy Spirit descended upon him; plainly showing us that it was not through the baptism of John, but through the meritorious obedience and the prayer of the Son of God, that the heavens were "rent asunder," and the Holy Spirit descended upon him.

Ver. 12.—Driveth him (*ἐκβάλλει*); literally, *driveth him forth*. That Holy Spirit, which not long before he had received at his baptism, impelled him with great energy; so that of his own accord he

went forth, armed with Divine power, into the desert, that there, as in a wrestling-place, he might contend alone with Satan. There Christ and antichrist met, and entered upon the conflict upon the issue of which our salvation depended.

Ver. 13.—Forty days tempted of Satan. St. Mark gathers up the whole temptation into this one sentence; and the passage would seem to imply that the three temptations recorded by St. Matthew and St. Luke were not the only trials through which our Lord passed during those forty days, although they were no doubt the prominent and the most powerful assaults upon our Redeemer. And he was with the wild beasts (*μετὰ τῶν θηρίων*). This shows the extreme solitude of the place. It shows also the innocence of our Lord, that there, in that wild and desolate district, amongst lions, and wolves, and leopards, and serpents, he neither feared them nor was injured by them. He dwelt amongst them as Adam lived with them in his state of innocence in Paradise. These wild beasts recognized and revered their Creator and their Lord. And the angels ministered unto him. This, as we learn from St. Matthew (iv. 11), was after his temptation and victory. Some have thought that Jesus became known to the devil as the Son of God, by the reverence and adoration of the angels. Thus Jesus showed in his own person, when alone he had striven with Satan and had overcome him, that heavenly comfort and the ministry of angels are provided by God for those who overcome temptation.

Ver. 14.—Now after that John was put in prison (*μετὰ τὸ παραδοθῆναι*); literally, *was delivered up*. This was our Lord's second coming into Galilee. Galilee had been specially designated as the scene of the Divine manifestation (see Isa. ix. 1, 2). The land of Galilee, or of Zebulun and Naphtali, had the misfortune to be the first in the sad calamity which fell upon the Jewish nation through the Assyrian invasion; and, in order to console them under this grievous affliction, Isaiah assures them that, by way of recompense, they, above the rest of their brethren, should have the chief share in the presence and ministry of the future promised Messiah. It seems probable that our Lord remained some time in Judæa after his baptism. From thence he went, with Andrew and Peter, two of John's disciples, into Galilee, where he called Philip. And then it was that he turned the water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana. This was his first coming out of Judæa into Galilee, related by St. John (i. 43, etc.). But the Passover brought him back into Judæa, that he might present himself in the temple; and then occurred

his first purging of the temple (John ii. 14). Then came the visit of Nicodemus to him by night; and then he began openly to preach and to baptize (John iii. 26), and thus incurred the envy of the scribes and Pharisees. Therefore he left Judæa, and departed again into Galilee; and this is the departure here recorded by St. Mark and by St. Matthew (iv. 12). Hence it came to pass that it was in Galilee that Christ called to himself four fishermen—Andrew and Peter, James and John.

Ver. 15.—The time is fulfilled; that is, the time for the coming of Messiah and of his kingdom. The kingdom which had been shut for so many ages was now to be reopened by the preaching and the death of Christ. The time is very accurately indicated. St. Matthew tells us (iv. 12) that "when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;" and then presently afterwards he adds, "From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." The time and place are also accurately specified by St. Peter (Acts x. 36, 37), where he tells Cornelius that "the word of peace, preached by Jesus Christ, was published throughout all Judæa, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached." It was necessary that these circumstances should be carefully detailed, because they were among the proofs of the Messiahship of Jesus. Elias must come first; and he had come in the person of the Baptist, although the prophecy probably awaits its full accomplishment in the actual reappearance of the great prophet of Israel before the second coming of our Lord. Repent ye, and believe the gospel. These words may be regarded as a summary of the method of salvation. Repentance and faith are the conditions of admission into the Christian covenant. Repentance has a special reference to God the Father, and faith, to Jesus Christ the eternal Son. It is in the gospel that Christ is revealed to us as a Saviour; and therefore we find Jesus Christ, as the object of our faith, distinguished from the Father as the object of our repentance. Repentance of itself is not sufficient—it makes no satisfaction for the Law which we have broken; and hence, over and above repentance, there is required from us faith in the Gospel, wherein Christ is revealed to us as a propitiator for sin, and as the only way of reconciliation with the Father. Without faith repentance becomes despair, and without repentance faith becomes only presumption. Join the two together, and the faithful soul is borne onwards, like a well-balanced vessel, to the haven where it would be.

Ver. 16.—Now as he walked by the sea

of Galilee; a better reading is (*καὶ παρὰ γὰρ*), and passing along. Our Lord came up from the south, passing through Samaria, till he reached Cana of Galilee. He then passed along by the seashore towards Capernaum; and on his way found the four disciples whom he had previously nominated, but who were now engaged in their calling of fishermen. St. Mark then relates the circumstances of their call in the exact words of St. Matthew, which were in all probability those of apostolical tradition ('Speaker's Commentary'). It will be seen that St. Mark's account, in this introductory portion of his Gospel, is very concise, and that there are many things to be supplied from the first chapter of St. John; as, for example, that after our Lord's baptism by John, and after his fasting and temptation in the desert, the Jews sent messengers to the Baptist, to inquire of him whether he were the Christ. John at once confessed that he was not the Christ, but that there was One even then among them, though they knew him not, who was indeed the Christ. And then, the very next day after, Jesus came to him, and John then said to those around him, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Upon this two of John's disciples at once betook themselves to Jesus. The first was Andrew, who forthwith brought his own brother Simon, afterwards called "Peter," to our Lord. Again, the day after this, our Lord called Philip, a fellow-citizen with Andrew and Peter, of Bethsaida. Then Philip brought Nathanael. Here, then, we have some more disciples nominated, who were with Jesus at the marriage in Cana of Galilee. Then Jesus returned again into Judæa; and those disciples "nominate," as we might call them, went back for a time to their occupation of fishermen. Meanwhile our Lord, while in Judæa, wrought miracles and preached, until the envy of the scribes and Pharisees constrained him to return again into Galilee. And then it was that he solemnly called Andrew and Peter, and James and John, as recorded by St. Mark here. So that St. John alone gives some account of the events of the first year of our Lord's ministry. The three synoptic Gospels give the narrative of his public ministry, commencing from the second year. He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea (*βάλλοντας ἀμφίβληστρον ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ*). Such was the text underlying the Authorized Version; but a better reading is *ἀμφιβάλλοντας ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ*. St. Mark thinks it unnecessary to mention the net at all; though doubtless it was the *ἀμφίβληστρον*, or casting-net. When our Lord likens his gospel to a net, he uses the figure of the drag-net (*σάχην*), a net of a

much larger size. But whether it be the casting-net or the drag-net, the comparison is a striking one. It is plain that, in the pursuit of his calling, the fisherman has no power to make any separation between the good fish and the worthless. He has little or no insight into what is going on beneath the surface of the water. So with the "fisher of men." He deals with the world spiritual and inviolable; and how, then, can he be fully conscious of the results of his work? His work is pre-eminently a work of faith. It may be observed here that St. Mark, in this earlier part of his narrative, speaks of St. Peter as Simon, though afterwards (ch. iii. 16) he calls him Peter. We may also notice here, once for all, St. Mark's constant use of the word "straightway" (*εὐθέως* or *εὐθὺς*). This word occurs no less than ten times in this chapter. In the Authorized Version the word (*εὐθέως*) is rendered indifferently by various English synonyms, as "forthwith," "immediately," etc.; whereas in the Revised Version it has been thought fit to note this peculiarity of mannerism in St. Mark's Gospel by the use of the same English synonym, "straightway," throughout this Gospel. The Holy Spirit, while guiding the minds of those whom he moved to write these records, did not use an overpowering influence, so as to interfere with their own natural modes of expression. Each sacred writer, while guarded against error, has reserved to him his own peculiarities of style and expression.

Vers. 19, 20.—The calling of James and John, the sons of Zebedee. St. Mark here mentions that they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants (*μετὰ τῶν μισθωτῶν*). This mention of the "hired servants" is peculiar to St. Mark. He often follows the narrative of St. Matthew; but he adds little details such as this, here and there, which show that he knew St. Matthew's narrative to be true, and also that he was an independent witness. This circumstance here incidentally mentioned shows that there was a difference in position in life between Zebedee's family and that of Simon and Andrew. It appears that all Jews had free right of fishing in the sea of Galilee, which abounded in fish. Zebedee, therefore, whose home seems to have been at Jerusalem, had a fishing establishment in Galilee, probably managed by his partners, Andrew and Simon, during his absence. But he would naturally visit the establishment from time to time with his sons, and especially before the great festivals, when a larger supply of fish than usual would be required for the visitors crowding to Jerusalem at that time. (See 'Speaker's Commentary'.)

Ver. 21.—And they went into Caper-

maum; literally, *they go into Capernaum* (*εἰσπορεύονται*). St. Mark is fond of the historical "present" tense, which often adds life and energy to his narrative. Who go into Capernaum? Our Lord and these four disciples, the elementary Church of God, the nucleus of that spiritual influence which is to spread wider and wider unto the perfect day. It does not follow that this going into Capernaum took place on the same day. They would not have been fishing on the sabbath day. The synagogue here spoken of was the gift of the good centurion of whom we read in St. Matthew (viii. 5) and St. Luke (vii. 2). Thus the first synagogue in which our Lord preached was the gift of a generous Gentile officer. It was an emblem of the union of Jews and Gentiles in one fold.

Ver. 22.—*They were astonished at his teaching* (*ἐξεπλήσσοντο ἐπὶ τῇ διδαχῇ*). The verb in the Greek is a very strong and expressive one; it is a very suitable word to express the first impressions of utter amazement produced by our Lord's "teaching." There were several things which caused his teaching (*δίδαχην*) to differ from that of the scribes. There was no lack of self-assertion in their teaching; but their words did not carry weight. Their teaching was based chiefly on tradition; it dwelt much on the "mint and anise and cummin" of religion, but neglected "judgment and mercy and faith." Christ's teaching, on the contrary, was eminently spiritual. And then he practised what he taught. Not so the scribes.

Thus far St. Mark's narrative bears the character of brevity and conciseness, suitable to an introduction. From this point his record is rich in detail and in graphic description.

Ver. 23.—*And straightway there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit.* According to the best authorities, the sentence in the Greek runs thus, *καὶ ἐκείνους ἦν ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ αὐτῶν*: *And straightway there was in their synagogue, etc.* This word "straightway" adds much force to the sentence. It marks the immediate effect of our Lord's preaching. *A man with an unclean spirit.* The words are literally, "a man in an unclean spirit" (*ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ*); in his grasp, so to speak; possessed by him. There can be no reasonable doubt as to the personality of this unclean spirit (see ch. iv. 24; xii. 41). The man was so absolutely in the power of this evil spirit that he seemed to dwell in him; just as the world is said by St. John (1 Epist. v. 19) to lie "in the evil one" (*ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ*). And he cried out. Who cried out? Surely the unclean spirit, using the possessed man as his instrument. In the case of a true prophet, inspired by the Holy Spirit, he is

permitted to use his own gifts, his reason, and even his own particular manner of speech; whereas here a false and lying spirit usurps the organs of speech, and makes them his own.

Ver. 24.—The expression, "Ea, incorrectly rendered *Let us alone*, has not sufficient authority to be retained here, though it is rightly retained in the parallel passage in St. Luke (iv. 34), where it is rendered in the Revised Version "Ah!" or "Ha!" If rendered, "Let us alone," or "Let alone," it must be assumed to be the imperative of *ἔδω*. It will be observed that this cry of the unclean spirit is spontaneous, before our Lord has addressed him. In real truth, the preaching of Jesus has already thrown the whole world of evil spirits into a state of excitement and alarm. The powers of darkness are beginning to tremble. They resent this intrusion into their domain. They feel that One greater than Satan has appeared, and they ask, *What have we to do with thee?* Wherein have we injured thee, that thou shouldst seek to drive us out of our possession? We have nothing to do with thee, thou Holy One of God; but we have a right to take possession of sinners. Bede says that the evil spirits, perceiving that "our Lord had come into the world, believed that they were about at once to be judged. They knew that dispossession would be their entrance upon a condition of torment, and therefore it is that they deprecate it." I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. St. Mark is very careful to bring out the hidden knowledge possessed by evil spirits, which enabled them at once to recognize the personality of Jesus (see ch. i. 34; iii. 11). It was given to them by him who has supreme power over the spiritual as well as the material world, to know as much as he saw fit that they should know; and he was pleased to make known as much as was needful. "But he made himself known to them, not as he makes himself known to the holy angels, who know him as the Word of God, and rejoice in his eternity, of which they partake. To the evil spirits he made himself known only so far as was requisite to strike with terror the beings from whose tyranny he was about to free those who were predestinated unto his kingdom and the glory of it" (see St. Augustine, 'City of God,' bk. ix. § 21).

Ver. 25.—*Hold thy peace, and come out of him.* It was necessary that our Lord should at once assert his absolute power over the evil spirits; and not only this, but also that he should show that he had nothing to do with them. Later on in his ministry it was objected to him that he cast out devils by the prince of the devils. Then,

further, the time was not yet arrived when Christ was to be publicly proclaimed as the Son of God. This great truth was to be gradually unfolded, and the people were to be persuaded by many miracles. But at present they were not prepared for this, and therefore our Lord charged his apostles that they should not make him known.

Ver. 26.—And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him (*καὶ σπαράξαν αὐτόν*). The Greek word *σπαράσσω* may be rendered in the passive *to be convulsed*. It is so used by medical writers, as Galen. It could hardly here mean physically “laceration,” for St. Luke (iv. 35) is careful to say that “when the devil had thrown him down in the midst, he came out of him, having done him no hurt.” At all events, the expression indicates the close union of the evil spirit with the possessed man’s consciousness and with his physical frame. And the manner in which he departed showed his malignity, as though, being compelled by the supreme authority of Christ to leave the man, he would injure him as far as he was able to do so. But the power of Christ prevented him from doing any real injury. And all this was done (1) that there might be clear evidence that the man was actually possessed by the evil spirit; (2) that the anger and malice of the evil spirit might be shown; and (3) that it might be manifest that the unclean spirit came out, not of his own accord, but constrained and vanquished by Christ. We may observe also that the power of Christ restrained him from the use of any articulate words. While he was in possession he used the possessed man’s organs of speech; but when he came out there was no articulate speech—it was nothing but a cry.

Ver. 27.—What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? The now generally approved text gives a different rendering, namely, *What is this? a new teaching!* (*Τί ἐστὶ τοῦτο; διδασχὴ καινὴ*). If this is the true reading—and there is excellent authority for it—it would mean that the bystanders inferred that this new and unexampled power indicated the accompanying gift of a “new teaching,” a new revelation. Nay, more, it indicated that he who wrought these miracles must be the promised Messiah, the true God; for he alone by his power could rule the evil spirits.

Ver. 28.—All the region round about Galilee; more literally, *all the region of Galilee, round about*; and the best readings add “everywhere” (*πανταχοῦ εἰς ἅλην τὴν περίχωρον τῆς Γαλιλαίας*). This is, of course, said by anticipation.

Ver. 29.—They came; a better reading is, *he came* (*ἦλθεν*). St. Matthew and St.

Luke speak of this house as the house of Simon Peter only; but St. Mark, writing probably under St. Peter’s direction, includes Andrew as a joint owner with Simon Peter.

Vers. 30, 31.—Lay sick of a fever (*κατέκειτο πυρέσσουσα*). St. Luke (iv. 38) uses a stronger expression, “was holden with a great fever” (*συνεχομένη πυρετῷ μεγάλῳ*). There were marshes in that district; hence the prevalence of fevers of a malignant character. There is no mention of the wife of Peter by name in the New Testament. We may infer, from the fact that his wife’s mother lived with him, that he was the head of the family. St. Paul (1 Cor. ix. 5) intimates that he was a married man, and that his wife accompanied him on his missionary tours. According to the testimony of Clement of Alexandria, and of Eusebius (iii. 30), she suffered martyrdom, and was led away to death in the sight of her husband, whose last words to her were, “Remember thou the Lord.” St. Mark here tells us that Jesus came and took [Simon’s wife’s mother] by the hand, and raised her up. St. Luke (iv. 39) says that “he stood over her and rebuked the fever.” Immediately the fever left her. The word “immediately” (*εὐθέως*), familiar as it is to St. Mark, is here omitted by the best authorities. But the omission is of no importance; for the fact that “the fever left her,” and that she was at once strong enough to “minister to them,” proves that it was not like an ordinary recovery from fever, which is wont to be slow and tedious.

Ver. 32.—At even, when the sun did set. It was the sabbath day; and, therefore, the sick were not brought to our Lord until six o’clock, when the sabbath ended. *When the sun did set* (*ὅτε ἔβυ δ ἥλιος*). St. Luke’s phrase is (*δύνοντος τοῦ ἡλίου*), “When the sun was, so to speak, submerged in the sea.” So in Virgil, ‘Æneid,’ lib. vii. 100—

“ . . . qua sol utrumque recurrens

Adspicit Oceanum; ”

the popular idea being that when the sun sets, it sinks into the ocean.

Vers. 33, 34.—The whole city was gathered together at the door. This would probably be the outer door in the wall, opening into the street; so that this need not be regarded as a hyperbolic statement. It is evidently the description of an eye-witness, or of one who had it from an eye-witness. He healed all that had need of healing, and he suffered not the devils to speak, for the reasons assigned at ver. 25.

Ver. 35.—And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed. Our Lord thus prepared himself by prayer for his first departure on a mi-

sonary tour. This would be the morning of the first day of the week. A great while before day he left the scene of excitement. That was not a time for preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. The miracles attracted attention to him, but they were not the object for which he came. They were necessary as means of stirring and awakening men's minds, and of fixing their attention upon him and upon the great salvation which he came to reveal. So he left the miracles to do their subordinate work; and he himself went into a desert place, that he might pray with more quiet and less distraction. He retired that he might escape the applause of men, which they were ready to lavish upon him after seeing so many miracles; that he might thus teach us to shun the praise of man. Let us learn from Christ to give the early morning to prayer, and to rise with the dawn of day, that we may have time for meditation, and give the firstfruits of the morning to God. The early morning is favourable for study; but it is specially dear to God and his angels.

Ver. 36.—And Simon and they that were with him followed after him (*κατεδίωξαν*); the word implies an "earnest pursuing." They that were with him would doubtless include Andrew and James and John, and probably others whose enthusiasm had been kindled by Simon Peter. St. Luke, in the parallel passage (iv. 42), tells us that "the multitudes sought after him, and came unto him, and would have stayed him, that he should not go from them."

Ver. 37.—All are seeking thee. The "thee" is here emphatic (*πάντες ζητοῦσί σε*).

Vers. 38, 39.—These two verses indicate the extent and duration of our Lord's first missionary journey. It must have been considerable. He preached in the synagogues. This would be on successive sabbaths. According to Josephus, Galilee was a densely populated district, with upwards of two hundred villages, each containing several thousand inhabitants.

Ver. 40.—The healing of the leper is recorded in all the three synoptic Gospels; but St. Mark gives more full details. From St. Matthew we learn that it took place after the sermon on the mount; and yet not at the very close of his missionary circuit. St. Luke (v. 12) says that the diseased man was "full of leprosy" (*πλήρης λέπρας*). The disorder was fully developed; it had spread over his whole body; he was leprosy from head to foot. This leprosy was designed to be specially typical of the disease of sin. It was not infectious. It was not because it was either infectious or contagious that the leper was bidden under the Jewish Law to warn others off, in the words, "Unclean! un-

clean!" It was in some cases hereditary. It was a very revolting disease. It was a poisoning of the springs of life. It was a living death. It was incurable by any human art or skill. It was the awful sign of sin reaching unto death; and it was cured, as sin is cured, only by the mercy and favour of God. No wonder, then, that our Lord specially displayed his power over this terrible disease, that he might thus prove his power over the still worse malady of sin. St. Mark here tells us that this leper knelt down (*καὶ γονυπετῶν*). St. Matthew says (viii. 2) that he "worshipped him," (*προσεκύνησεν αὐτῷ*); St. Luke says (v. 12) that "he fell on his face" (*πεσὼν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον*). We thus see that the scriptural idea of worship is associated with some lowly posture of the body. But with this worship of the body, the leper offered also the homage of the soul. His prostration of himself before Christ was not merely a rendering of honour to an earthly being; it was a rendering of reverence to a Divine Being. For he does not say to him, "If thou wilt ask of God, he will give it thee;" but he says, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." It is as though he said, "I know that thou art of equal power with the Father, and therefore supreme Lord over diseases; so that by thy word alone thou canst remove this leprosy from me. I ask, therefore, that thou wouldst be willing to do this, and then I know that the thing is done." The leper had faith in the Divine power of Christ, partly out of his own inward illumination, and partly by the evidence of the miracles which Christ had already wrought. If thou wilt, thou canst. Observe the hypothetical expression, "If thou wilt." He has no doubt as to Christ's power, but the words, "If thou wilt" show that his desire for healing was controlled by resignation to the will of God. For bodily diseases are often necessary for the health of the soul; and this God knows, though man knows it not. Therefore, in asking for earthly blessings, it behoves us to resign ourselves to the will and wisdom of God.

Ver. 41.—Observe in this verse that Jesus stretched forth his hand and touched the leper. Thus he showed that he was superior to the Law, which forbade contact with a leper. He touched him, knowing that he could not be defiled with the touch. He touched him that he might heal him, and that his Divine power of healing might be made manifest. "Thus," says Bede, "God stretched out his hand and touched the human nature in his incarnation, and restored to the Church those who had been cast out, that they might be able to offer their bodies a living sacrifice to him of whom it is said, 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.'" I will; be

thou clean; literally, *be thou made clean* [καθαρίσθητι]. It is well observed here by St. Jerome that our Lord aptly answers both the petitions of the leper. "If thou wilt;" "I will." "Thou canst make me clean;" "Be thou made clean." Indeed, Christ gives him more than he asks for. He makes him whole, not only in body, but in spirit. Thus Christ, in his loving-kindness, exceeds the wishes of his supplicants, that we may learn from him to do the same, and to enlarge our hearts, both towards God and towards our brethren.

Ver. 42.—Straightway—St. Mark's favourite word—the leprosy departed from him. There is no interval between the command and the work of Christ. "He spake, and it was done." His will is his omnipotence. By this act Christ showed that he came into the world as a great Physician, that he might cure all diseases, and cleanse us from all our defilements. The word "straightway" shows that Christ healed the leper, not by any natural means, but by a Divine power which works instantly. He is alike powerful both to command and to do. St. Matthew says here (viii. 3) that straightway "his leprosy was cleansed" (ἐκαθαρίσθη αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα). There is here what is called a "hypallage," or inversion of the meaning, which is, of course, that "he was cleansed from his leprosy."

Ver. 43.—And he straitly charged him. The Greek verb here (ἐμβριμώμενος) has a tinge of severity in it, "he strictly [or sternly] charged him." Both word and action are severe. He straightway sent him out (ἐξεβάλεν αὐτὸν). It may be that he had incurred this rebuke by coming so near with his defilement to the holy Saviour. Christ thus showed not only his respect for the ordinances of the Jewish Law, but also how hateful sin is to the most holy God.

Ver. 44.—See thou say nothing to any man. St. Chrysostom says that our Lord gave him this charge, "to shun ostentation, and to teach us not to boast of our virtues, but to

hide them." It is evident that he wished to draw the thoughts of men away from his miracles, and to fix them upon his doctrine. Go thy way, show thyself to the priest; the priest who in the order of his course presided over the rest. Our Lord sent him to the priest, that he might be seen to recognize their special office in cases of leprosy; and further, that the priest himself might have clear evidence that this leper was cleansed, not after the custom of the Law, but by the operation of grace.

Ver. 45.—But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to spread abroad the matter. It seems difficult to blame the man for doing what he thought must tend to the honour of his Healer; though, no doubt, it would have been better if he had humbly obeyed. And yet it was to be expected that the knowledge of our Lord's mighty works would be published by others. In this particular instance the effect of this man's conduct was probably unexpected by himself; for it led to the withdrawal of Christ from Capernaum. The crowds who were attracted to him by the fame of his miracles would have hampered him, so that he could not have exercised his ministry; for even in the desert places they sought him out, and came to him from every quarter.

It should be noticed here that this first chapter of St. Mark embraces, in a very condensed form, about twelve months of our Lord's public ministry, from his baptism by John. And it is a record of uninterrupted progress. The time had not then come for the opposition of the scribes and Pharisees and Herodians to show itself. It was, no doubt, wisely ordained that his gospel should take root and lay hold of the hearts and consciences of men, as it must have done in the minds of the Galileans more especially, before it had to encounter the envy and malice of those who ultimately would bring him to his cross.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*The beginning of the gospel.* "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God." The writers of the first four books of the New Testament are called evangelists, because they gathered up, put into writing, and published to the world the accounts of the Lord Jesus which were current among the first Christians, and which were constantly repeated by the first preachers of our religion. They did this under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and their treatises come to us with Divine authority. Not only is the record credible; it is such that it claims our attention, and demands and justifies our faith. Of these four evangelists, Mark is one—doubtless the "John whose surname was Mark"—of whom we read in the Book of the Acts that his family resided in Jerusalem, and that he himself was a fellow-labourer with the Apostle Paul. It has generally been held that Mark was especially under the influence and guidance

of Peter. The opening sentence of his Gospel is brief, striking, and full of meaning and of Divine truth.

I. Observe the SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL. Matthew and Luke begin their narratives with a relation of the circumstances of the birth of our Lord; John commences with the pre-existence of the Word; Mark, whose treatise is the shortest, opens with the inauguration of our Lord's ministry. This second Gospel begins with Christ's baptism, and closes with his ascension. "The beginning" suggests *the time when the gospel was not*. Before the gospel was the Law. "The Law and the prophets," said Jesus, "were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached." What a different world it must have been to live in when there was no gospel!—at least in the full, the Christian, meaning of that term. "The beginning" suggests a *foretold and appointed time*. It was in the fulness of the time that the promised Messiah appeared, at the conjunction of national and of universal history foreseen by the Omniscient and indicated in prophecy. Accordingly the sacred historian at once appeals to the writings of Malachi and Isaiah to show the real continuity of sacred history. Nothing of God's appointment occurs haphazard; he sees the end from the beginning. "The beginning" points on to *the completion*. "Better," says the wise man, "is the end of a thing than the beginning;" yet the beginning is necessary to the end. It was so with the earthly ministry of Christ. It grew in solemnity and spiritual power as it approached its period; yet the earlier stages were preparatory for those which followed, and indispensable. That Christ's ministry dated—according to apostolic teaching—from the baptism of John, is apparent from Peter's language upon the occasion of the choice of a twelfth apostle, from his discourse before Cornelius, and from Paul's discourse at Antioch of Pisidia.

II. Observe the SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GOSPEL—the term by which the substance of the Christian record is here designated. The meaning, generally speaking, of the term is "good news," "glad, welcome tidings." But the Christian use of the term—which has absorbed all the meaning attaching to this glorious word—is special. The gospel is the designation of the facts and doctrines of Christianity. We look for these facts and doctrines in the writings of Mark and of the other three evangelists. The gospel was *spoken in words*, e.g. as here. The gospel was *embodied in deeds and sufferings*, e.g. in this record of Mark, the gospel of power. The gospel *came from God*, who alone was able to impart the blessings it promised. The gospel *came to men*—sinful, needy, helpless; who, without a gospel, must have remained in wretchedness. The gospel *proclaimed* pardon for sin, peace for the conscience, renewal for the whole nature, guidance and strength for the spiritual career, salvation, and life eternal.

III. Observe the SIGNIFICANCE OF THE APPELLATIONS HERE APPLIED TO HIM who is the Author, the Theme, the Substance of the gospel. 1. He is denominated *Jesus*—the name he bore as a human being, suggestive, therefore, of his humanity, yet in itself implying that he was the Salvation, the Help, of Jehovah. 2. He is denominated *Christ*—an official name, denoting his anointing and appointment by God to the discharge of the Messianic offices, as the Prophet, Priest, and King of men. (Note that the combined name, Jesus Christ, does not occur elsewhere in the first three Gospels.) 3. He is denominated *the Son of God*—a designation which impresses upon us his divinity and authority. Whereas Matthew opens his Gospel by showing that Jesus is the Son of David, a fact of special interest to the Hebrews, Mark takes a higher flight. These three appellations together present us with a full, delightful, instructive, and inspiring representation of our Saviour's nature and mediatorial work and qualifications.

APPLICATION. 1. You need this gospel. 2. This gospel is sufficient for you. 3. This gospel is adapted to you. 4. This gospel alone can bless you. 5. This gospel is offered to you.

Vers. 2—8.—*The ministry of the forerunner*. This evangelist enters upon his treatise with no further preface than is to be found in the first verse. He has to tell the good news concerning Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And he begins his narrative at once, with an account of the ministry of that grand, heroic prophet, whose great distinction it was to be the herald of the Messiah, and whose greatness was in nothing more apparent than in this—he was willing to be superseded by his Lord, and to be lost in him: "He must increase, but I must decrease." In these verses we have—

I. A GLIMPSE OF THE FORERUNNER'S PERSON AND CHARACTER. 1. He was a *priest*. This we learn from St. Luke's narrative of his parentage and birth. John owed something of the respect and acceptance he met with to this fact. Yet his ministry was not sacerdotal, though his education and his associations must all have fitted him to testify to "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." 2. He was a *prophet*. As Christ himself bore witness, "a prophet, yea, and more than a prophet." He spoke forth the mind of God. He did not sacrifice for the people or reason with them; he declared to them the message he had received from heaven. 3. He was an *ascetic* in the wilderness. In his dress and mode of life he resembled Elijah the Tishbite. He lived in the wilderness of Judæa, and in the wilder parts of the valley of the Jordan. His raiment was of cloth woven from coarse camel's hair; his food was that of a child of the desert, "locusts and wild honey." He wore no soft raiment; he was no reed shaken by the wind. Independent alike of the luxuries of life and of the approval of his fellow-men, he lived apart. 4. He was a fearless, faithful *preacher*. He did not ask—Is this message what the people wish to hear? but—Is this the word of the living God? When the Divine commission was entrusted to him, no power on earth could prevent him from fulfilling it.

II. A STATEMENT THAT HIS MINISTRY WAS PROPHETICALLY FORETOLD. Mark quotes from Malachi, the last of the prophets, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he will prepare my way before me." He quotes from Isaiah, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." The forerunner was himself conscious of this; for, disclaiming Messiahship, he claimed to be the voice of the King's herald. Jesus, too, made the same assertion, "If ye will believe it, this is Elijah, which was to come." All was ordered and predicted beforehand by the wisdom of the Most High.

III. A VIEW OF HIS REMARKABLE SPIRITUAL MINISTRY. John did no miracles. But he spoke with a Divine authority; and he exercised an influence which was felt throughout the whole nation, and which was an historical and recognized fact. The elements of his ministry were these: 1. The *prediction* that the kingdom of God, or of heaven, was at hand. 2. An *appeal to repentance*, based upon the approach of the new kingdom. 3. The *administration of a rite* symbolical of spiritual purification.

IV. AN INSIGHT INTO THE REMARKABLE RESULTS OF THIS MINISTRY. 1. A general and profound impression was produced. 2. The most sinful classes shared in this moral awakening. 3. The religious leaders of the community were led to interest themselves in his message. 4. The political rulers of the land came to some extent under his influence. 5. The ardent and religious youth were at once attracted and awed by the presence and ministry of the prophet. The choice spirits of the generation rising up, the flower of the Hebrew youth, became his disciples. 6. There resulted a widespread conscience of sin, and a hope and desire for a great Saviour.

V. A DESCRIPTION OF HIS GREAT OFFICE AND FUNCTION. Above all, John was the forerunner and the herald of the Messianic King, even Jesus. Even before he met his cousin, before he administered baptism to him, he bore witness concerning him. He witnessed: 1. To his *personal* superiority, speaking of him as "One mightier than I." 2. And to his *ministerial* superiority; for while John's baptism was one with water unto repentance, that of Jesus was "with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Events proved the truth of this testimony.

APPLICATION. To receive the witness of John is to acknowledge the Messiahship of Jesus, to yield heart and life to the Saviour, seeking through him the forgiveness of sins, the renewal of the heart, and the consecration of the whole being.

Vers. 9—11.—The baptism of Christ. As this evangelist commences his treatise with what he terms "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ," it is natural that our Lord should first be introduced by him as devoted to his ministry of benevolence in the rite of baptism; for this incident in our Saviour's life is justly held to have inaugurated his public work. What a hold the event has taken upon the Christian mind may be seen from the vast number of pictures in which the religious artists of all Christian countries have depicted the baptism. A striking scene for a painter, and a delightful theme for the preacher!

I. The baptism of our Saviour exhibits HIS RELATION TO THE FORERUNNER. The

ministry of the herald preceded that of the King. Jesus was yet in the seclusion of Nazareth when John was attracting multitudes of all classes, and from all parts of the land, to his teaching and baptism in the Jordan valley. When Jesus came to John it seemed, to ordinary judgments, that the less came to the greater, the obscure to the famous. But it was not so. To all around the relation between the two was unknown. Nevertheless, to the two it was clear enough. The forerunner knew that his mission was temporary and introductory, and that "the coming One" should eclipse his light as the sun extinguishes the bright morning star. Hence the reluctance of the Baptist to do anything which might seem to militate against the just dignity of the Being in whom he recognized the Messiah. "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" This was the Person whose shoe's latchet he had declared himself unworthy to unloose. A slave would untie the thong of his master's sandals and bear them in his hand; John deemed even such an office too honourable for himself to discharge for the anointed King of mankind. It was not only in the presence of Jesus that John felt this; the constant conviction of his mind was this, "I must decrease, but he must increase." But the witness was not all on one side. Jesus also bore testimony to John. In the very act of submitting to the baptism of the prophet, he acknowledged that prophet's greatness and ratified his claims. And he, in express words, testified to John's unique position, as predicted by the ancient prophets, and of the man himself and his character and work declared, "Of men born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist."

II. The baptism of our Saviour exhibits **HIS RELATION TO THE HUMAN RACE**. There seems to be no way of explaining and justifying this historical fact except by admitting that Jesus was specially the representative man. In endeavouring to explain, to account for, the baptism of our Divine Saviour, we are met with a serious difficulty. The baptism of John was unto repentance and with a view to the remission of sins. Men came, and were invited to come, to receive the symbol of a cleansing which, being spiritual, could only be wrought by a spiritual process. The publicans, harlots, and soldiers, whose conscience accused them of sin, in coming to John's baptism, confessed their wrong doing and ill desert, and professed their desire, by repentance and reformation, to escape from the trammels of evil and to live a holier life. They were warned that mere feeling, mere conformity, mere profession, mere water baptism, were all insufficient, and, if alone, worthless; and they were directed to bring forth fruit meet for repentance. Now, in the case of such persons, and, we may add, in the case of all the members of a sinful, guilty race, a moral purification was and is indispensably necessary. But what reason, what appropriateness, what meaning, could there be in the reception of a baptism such as this by the sinless Saviour of the world, the holy and faultless and beloved Son of God? What need had he to confess and to ask pardon for sin? He had no sin to confess, no repentance to work out. If he required no spiritual purifying, to what purpose should he undergo the rite of lustration? The only answer seems to be that Jesus did this, not as a personal, but as *an official and representative act*. The circumstances of Christ's life and death are not to be understood unless we bear in mind that he acted and suffered as the second Adam, as the federal head and representative of humanity, as the Son of man. So regarded, we can to some extent understand the answer of our Lord to the remonstrance of the baptizer. It became him, as our Mediator, "to fulfil all righteousness." He had mixed with the *sinful* population; he was to live among and to minister unto the victims of sin; he was to be betrayed into the hand of sinners; he was to be numbered, in his death, with the transgressors; he was, in a word, made sin for us, though he knew no sin. As, then, he had in infancy been circumcised, though there was no sinful nature to be put away; as he was to be put to death as a malefactor, though no fault was found in him; so he was baptized, though he had personally no need of purification, no sins to wash away. He was our Representative in his birth and ministry, in his death and burial, and, none the less, in his baptism by John in Jordan.

III. The baptism of our Saviour exhibits **HIS RELATION TO THE DIVINE FATHER**. At the commencement of the ministry of Jesus it was appropriate that an attestation of his mission should be given from above—not only for his own sake, but rather for the sake, first of John, and then of those to whom in consequence John should bear witness. Thus the forerunner was able to declare, "I have seen, and have borne witness that

this is the Son of God." There were probably no spectators of our Lord's baptism, and we are indebted to John himself for the record of what happened and of what became the accepted tradition among the early Christians. 1. Observe what was *seen*. It was as Jesus went up out of the river, and whilst he was praying, that the marvellous sign was given. The heavens were rent asunder and opened, indicating the interest taken in the Redeemer's career by the great God of heaven himself, and the Spirit, in the form and with the swift, gentle, hovering movement of a dove, descended upon Jesus. How beautiful an emblem of the Divine power of the ministry which was thus inaugurated, and solemnly, sacredly blessed from above! Surely it is significant that Christ should be represented as the Lamb of God, and the Holy Spirit as the Dove from heaven. A lesson as to the gentleness and grace characteristic of Christ's gospel. 2. Observe, further, what was *heard*. Language proceeded from the opened heavens, indicative of the Divine approval and complacency. Notice (1) the statement of relation and dignity, "Thou art my beloved Son;" and (2) the statement of satisfaction and approbation, "In thee I am well pleased."

APPLICATION. 1. Learn hence the Divine dignity of Emmanuel. 2. And, at the same time, his humility and condescension. 3. Let this marvellous combination of all mediatorial qualifications in the person of Christ encourage your faith in him and your devotion to his cause.

Vers. 12, 13.—The temptation of Christ. The portal by which our Lord entered upon his earthly ministry has two pillars—the baptism and the temptation. In his baptism the Saviour was visibly and audibly approved by God the Father. In his temptation he was manifestly put to the test by the power of evil. Consecration and probation were thus the two elements in the Redeemer's inauguration, by which he was dedicated to the earthly ministry of humiliation, obedience, and benevolence. Mark's narrative of the temptation is brief, but suggestive.

I. The evangelist notes **THE DIVINE IMPULSE** which led Jesus to the place appointed for this spiritual encounter. The same Spirit who had just descended upon him like a dove now drove him forth, as with the impulse of a lion, as upon the wings of an eagle, to endure the great probation. The reason of this is to be found in the Divine intention that the Son of man should partake, not only in our human nature, but in our human experience. He did not shrink even from so keen a contest as that which awaited him. Led, driven, by the Spirit, the Divine Christ met his foe at the appointed spot, as the champion of humanity, in single combat, to submit to the fiercest assaults of Satan.

II. In the fewest words is described **THE SCENE** of the temptation. We often encounter the tempter in the crowded streets and in the thronged assembly. Yet those who, like the monks of Egypt, have fled to the desert to escape his assaults and elude his wiles, have ever found their error. No place is secure from spiritual conflict or from sinful suggestion. But our great Leader chose to wrestle with the adversary alone, without the countenance of human virtue or the sympathy of human friendship to assist him. This was challenging the foe to do his worst. They met face to face. The only companions of Christ in the desert solitude were those wild beasts, whose presence emphasizes the awful loneliness of the spot.

III. **THE TEMPTER** is mentioned by name. Satan was the foe with whom the Saviour engaged in this spiritual conflict. The tempter was brought into immediate contact with the Holy Being upon whom he exercised all his devices in vain. In ordinary cases the enemy of souls employs his emissaries, perhaps supernatural, certainly in many cases human. Scripture teaches us that our adversary is "as a roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour." We, as Christians, should not be ignorant of his devices. Sometimes he is transformed, as it were, into an angel of light. But let us not be deceived; the temptation betrays whence it comes, however it may be disguised by subtlety and craft.

IV. The evangelist records **THE PERIOD** of our Lord's temptation. It lasted for forty days—a period agreeing with the term of very memorable events in the life of our Lord's illustrious predecessors, Moses and Elijah. A prolonged probation, repeated assaults, variety of spiritual warfare, and a decisive issue,—all were rendered possible by the protracted period to which this desert seclusion was extended. The several temptations

which occupied this term are recorded in detail by the other evangelists, Matthew and Luke. 1. A temptation appealing to ordinary bodily wants. 2. A temptation appealing to spiritual pride. 3. A temptation appealing to ambition and the love of power.

V. St. Mark implies, what the other evangelists explicitly record, our SAVIOUR'S VICTORY. 1. It was gained by a *holy character*. The prince of this world came, and had nothing in him. 2. By a resolute and determined *opposition*. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." 3. By the use of the weapons of *Scripture*. If the devil quoted the Word, as he can for his purposes, Christ had ready the appropriate reply, couched in the words of inspiration. 4. It was a *complete* victory; for the tempter was foiled at every point. 5. Yet it was a victory which did not preserve the assailed from a renewal of attack. The devil left him for a season, only again to return to do his worst and again and finally to fail.

VI. The period of conflict and resistance was succeeded by ANGELIC MINISTRATIONS. The Son of God was encompassed by the services of these messengers from heaven, from his birth to his agony, and from his agony to his resurrection and ascension. How natural that those beings who minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation should minister to him who is salvation's Author and Giver! And it is instructive to find that, as the agency of temptation was not a human agency, so the ministrations which followed were not human ministrations. In what way the angels tended their Lord and did him service, we are not told; whether, as poetic fancy has feigned, by spreading for him a table in the wilderness, or by soothing his spirit by their sympathy as he emerged from the scene of unparalleled conflict and unparalleled victory.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. Let every man expect temptation; it is the common lot, from which the Son of man himself was not exempt. 2. If temptation does not come in one form it will come in another; the tempter adapts himself to age and sex, temperament and education, position and character. 3. Let the Christian, when tempted, remember that he has the sympathy and may look for the succour of the High Priest, who was tempted as we are, though without sin. 4. Let the Saviour's mode of meeting and resisting the tempter be prayerfully pondered and copied; the Scriptures furnish the Christian's armoury, "The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God."

Vers. 14, 15.—*The Divine Preacher*. Christ was known as a Prophet before he was manifested as the Priest and the King of humanity. He came preaching. In these verses is related the fact of a ministry in Galilee. The occasion was the cessation of John's ministry; the place, that northern province which had been foretold as the scene of the Messiah's labours, and in which he had passed the years of his youth. We have here put upon record the substance of the Saviour's preaching.

I. CHRIST WAS A PREACHER. This fact seems to imply three things. 1. That Jesus regarded men as *intelligent, responsible beings*. He did not seek to awe or terrify them by portents. He did not attempt to cajole them by complying with their sinful tendencies and prejudices. He did not appeal to superstition. He treated men as beings having an understanding to be convinced, a heart to be affected, a moral nature rendering them susceptible to Divine motives and capable of willing obedience. 2. That Jesus had *confidence in his message*. It was not with that assumption of authority which disguises conscious weakness; it was not with the hesitation which betrays suspicion of the weakness of the cause; it was with the confidence of one who speaks forth words of truth and soberness,—that the great Teacher spoke. 3. That Jesus had the assurance that his message would be accepted. His was not a fruitless enterprise. He came with a Divine commission, which should not, could not, be frustrated. His words should not pass away; all should be fulfilled. And Christ's gospel is still to be promulgated in the same manner, in the same spirit. Christ's ministers are called upon to preach—to preach Christ crucified—to preach, whether men will hear or forbear. The religion of our Saviour is one which appeals to what is best and purest in human nature enlightened by the Spirit of God.

II. CHRIST, AS A PREACHER, MADE AN ANNOUNCEMENT. 1. An appointed time for a Divine visitation had now arrived. "Known unto God are all his works from the foundation of the world." There is a season for every step in the Divine procedure. That the advent of the Messiah, and the setting up of a spiritual kingdom, and the bringing in of an everlasting righteousness, were all foreseen and foretold, we are dis-

tinctly assured. This, the period of Christ's ministry, was "in the fulness of the time." 2. The kingdom of God was at hand. Not that the Most High had abdicated his rightful throne; but he had long suffered the rebellion of men, and had not interfered with the tyrant who had usurped dominion. The evils of this unjust tyranny had now been made apparent. It was time, according to the counsels of God, that rightful authority should be asserted and re-established. Little as the Prophet of Nazareth seemed, to ordinary eyes, the Prince who should defeat the foe of God and man, this was the character in which he came to earth, the work and warfare he came to accomplish. 3. Christ preached the gospel of God. Good news for mankind: an amnesty for rebels, the favour of the Divine Sovereign, peace between heaven and earth, salvation for sinners, and eternal life for the dead,—such was the theme of this Messianic proclamation. In preaching the gospel our Lord could not but preach himself, for he not only brought the gospel—he *was* the gospel.

III. CHRIST ADDRESSED TO MEN AN EXHORTATION—A SUMMONS. A preacher has not only truth to state, good news to proclaim, but he has counsel to offer, a requirement to make. As here succinctly recorded, the preaching of Christ enjoined upon men two precepts. 1. They were summoned to *repentance*. This is a universal condition of entering into the benefits of Christ's kingdom. This change of heart, of thought, of purpose, is a change indispensable to the highest privileges. It is the preparation of spirit which, on the Divine side, is regeneration. "Except a man be born again [afresh], he cannot see the kingdom of God." The condition of repentance is one binding through all time. There are flagrant and notorious sinners, who must be brought to penitence and contrition before they can receive the forgiveness which God has promised and which Christ has secured. There are unspiritual professors of Christianity, who have the form of godliness without the power, who must be led to see the sandy foundation upon which they build before they can seek and find their foundation upon the Rock of Ages. There are backsliders, who have gone back religiously, who have lost their first love, and have ceased to do their first works, who must repent before they can enjoy the pleasures and privileges of religion. Christianity makes no compromise with sin, has no flattery for sinners. Her voice rings through the wilderness and the city, and her demand is this—Repent! 2. They were summoned to *belief of the gospel*. This is a condition which respects the relation and attitude of the mind *towards God*. Those who credit God's promise alone can experience and enjoy its fulfilment. Faith is ever represented in Scripture as the means of appropriating what has been provided by Divine grace. A condition this both honourable to God and spiritually profitable to the believer. Faith is the Divine path to acceptance and pardon, to life and immortality. Christ demanded and deserved faith.

APPLICATION. This is a gospel *for sinners*. It is they who need a gospel, sunk as they are in sin, exposed as they are to condemnation and destruction. This is a gospel *for you*. Whoever you are, you need it; and, in your heart of hearts, you are well aware that it is so. God sent his Son that *you* might be saved. Christ gave himself for *you*. Unto *you* is the word of salvation sent. Christ has suffered that *you* might escape, has died that *you* might live. In him there is for *you* pardon for the past and strength for the present and hope for the future. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and *thou* shalt be saved." This is a gospel *from God*. Only he could send news adapted to the case of sinners, and he has sent such news. Here is the expression of his deepest sympathy, his tenderest solicitude, his most fatherly love. Coming from him, the gospel cannot be an illusion; it may be trusted. It is the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. Yet, what is this gospel to those who believe not? Good news to those who reject it is all the same as bad news. There is every reason, every motive, for believing it. Christ will be glorified, God will be rejoiced, angels will sympathize and sing with gladness, and you will be saved. The gospel is worthy of belief in itself, and it is exactly and perfectly adapted to you. Believe it, and believe it now!

Vers. 16—20.—Fishers of men. It was an incident of great moment in the history of Christianity and of the world—this, the calling by our Lord Jesus of his followers and apostles. Christ did not make many converts; but the few he did make made many, so that, in selecting and appointing them, he was sowing the seed of a great

and eternal harvest. He probably called these four more than once—first during the ministry of the forerunner, again as in the text, and a third time when he commissioned them formally to act as his apostles.

I. Observe WHO THE MEN WERE WHO WERE CALLED. 1. Their *position in life*; they were from the industrial classes. Not only did the Son of God choose himself to be born and brought up among the laborious and comparatively poor, he selected his immediate attendants, his personal friends, the promulgators of his religion, from the same rank of life. He took the form of a servant; he was known as “the carpenter’s son;” it was asked concerning him, “Whence hath this man learning?” Luke indeed was a physician, and Paul a scholar, but the twelve seem to have been of lowly condition and surroundings. 2. Their *occupation*; they were fishermen. There was, no doubt, a common calling among the dwellers by the shores of the Galilean lake. There may have been some moral qualities, such as reverence and simplicity, which fitted these men for their new calling and life. 3. In *relationship* they were united by family ties; for these four disciples were two pairs of brothers. Simon and Andrew, and likewise James and John, were not only called together, but seem to have been associated together in an evangelistic ministry, when our Lord sent his disciples forth “two and two.” Natural kindred and affection were thus sanctified by community in Christian calling and service. The two pairs were friends, comrades, and associates in labour. 4. They were, at all events in some instances, specially *prepared for this calling*. Certainly some and probably all of these four were previously disciples of John the Baptist, who, in their hearing, had witnessed to Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus thus honoured his forerunner by receiving disciples from his training.

II. Regard THE CALL HERE RELATED. 1. The *Caller* was the Divine Christ. An inestimable privilege to hear from those lips a gracious summons such as this! It is a sacred responsibility to hear the voice of Christ speak to ourselves with words of invitation, command, or commission. 2. The *manner of the call* deserves attention; it was with authority. Simple and few were the words, but they were the words of One whose utterances carried with them their own authority—an authority acknowledged at once by the conscience of those to whom it was addressed. 3. The *import* of the call was most momentous—“Follow me!” This call seems to have been addressed to these men on more occasions than one. They were directed to follow Jesus that they might listen to his teaching and observe his mighty works, that they might be qualified for the solemn commission which was to be entrusted to them upon the Saviour’s ascension.

III. Remark THE PROMISE GIVEN in connection with the call. These Galilean fishermen should become “fishers of men.” Our Saviour here takes advantage of the deep resemblances between natural processes and human activities on the one hand, and spiritual realities on the other. The sea in which Christian ministers are called to toil is this world, is human society, with all its uncertainties, vicissitudes, and dangers. The fish they seek are human souls, oftentimes hard to find and to catch. The net which they let down at the Divine command is the gospel, fitted to include and to bring to safety all souls of men. The skill and patience and vigilance of the fishermen may well be studied and imitated by those who watch and labour for souls. To enclose within the net is to bring souls within the limits of the privileges and motives, the laws and hopes of the gospel. To land what is taken is to bring the rescued safely into the eternal security of heaven.

IV. THE RESPONSE TO THE CALL is deserving of our observation. 1. There was cheerful *compliance*. No objection, no hesitation, no condition, not even an inquiry; but willing, contented obedience to a summons felt to be authoritative and binding. 2. This compliance was *immediate*. So should all respond whom Christ invites to come after him. Not a moment should be lost in choosing a lot so honourable, so desirable, so happy. 3. It was *self-sacrificing*. They left their nets, their kindred, their occupation, readily giving up all in order that they might follow Jesus. It was a condition which the Master now and again imposed, to prove the sincerity of his people’s love, devotion, and zeal.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. For preachers and teachers of the gospel. Remember what is the vocation with which you are called. Let this be the acknowledged end you set before you—to be fishers of men, to gain souls. 2. For hearers of the gospel.

Remember that Christ has called you and is calling you. The burden of his appeal is this—"Come ye after me!" And, when saved, seek that you may be the means of saving others. 3. For those who, hearing the voice of the Lord Christ, are disposed to obey his call. Bear in mind that he demands a complete surrender, that he will not be satisfied unless the heart is dedicated to him, unless, with the heart, all that we have is yielded to his service. There is sure to be something in the way of obeying the Divine and heavenly call. You will, like the fishermen of Galilee, have something to give up in following Christ. Be prepared for this, and count the cost. But, for your soul's sake and for the sake of your salvation, let nothing hinder you from faith and consecration. "Count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord."

Vers. 21, 22.—*Christ's authority in teaching.* This passage informs us of three circumstances connected with our Lord's early Galilean ministry. 1. It was exercised largely in Capernaum, a populous and busy town on the western shore of the Lake of Galilee. This fact exhibits Christ's resolve to mix with the people and to seek their enlightenment and welfare. 2. It was exercised specially on the sabbath days. In this Christ practically asserted his own principle, "The sabbath was made for man." Although a day of physical rest, it was stamped, by the Lord's action, as a day for spiritual activity and influence. 3. It was frequently exercised in the synagogues. These were not, indeed, of Mosaic institution, but had sprung up since the Captivity, and were especially connected with the professional labours of the scribes. They were a sign that the Hebrews cultivated an intellectual religion. The practice of regular religious instruction was sanctioned by the great Teacher, when he attended the synagogues, conformed to their usages, and took advantage of the assembling of congregations in them to exercise his ministry of teaching.

I. CHRIST FULFILLED HIS SPIRITUAL MINISTRY AMONG MEN LARGELY BY TEACHING.

1. This was a recognition of man's intelligent, rational nature. Our Lord did not appeal so much to men's fears as to their reason, their gratitude, their love. Instruction is the debt which every generation owes to its successor, and which the wise owe to the ignorant. The more the ministers of Christianity appeal to the intelligence of their hearers, the more do they follow the example of their Master. 2. It was an assertion of his own office. He claimed to be "the Light of the world." And this was in virtue of his very nature. He was "the Word of God," uttering the thought, expressing the mind, of God. There is something deeply affecting and truly encouraging in this representation of the incarnate Son of God, going about teaching the ignorant, the poor, the uncared for. 3. It was a revelation of Christ's own character. What condescension, gentleness, sympathy, were manifest in the quiet, patient manner in which the Lord frequented these lowly edifices and taught those simple congregations!

II. CHRIST'S TEACHING WAS RECOGNIZED AS AUTHORITATIVE. 1. In this it contrasted with the teaching of the scribes, who were the acknowledged and professional instructors in religion of the people of Israel. But they were expositors of the sacred books; they repeated and enforced the traditions of the elders. There was little or nothing original in their lessons; whereas Christ spoke from his own mind and heart, and acknowledged no master, no superior. 2. There was authority in our Lord's presence and manner. From the impression which his teaching made upon strangers, from their recorded testimony, it is clear that there was a Divine dignity in his aspect and his speech; "Never man spake like this man." 3. There was authority in the substance of his teaching. Truth has an authority of its own, an authority which is often, when questioned by the lips, confessed in the heart. Our Lord's revelations of the Father, his expositions of the spiritual nature of religion and morality, his insight into human nature, his predictions of the future,—all alike impressed his hearers with a sense of his special, unique authority. 4. This quality in our Lord's teaching was confessed by the conscience of men. It was not that the people were simply awed by his manner and language. What was best in their nature did homage to him. They could not question his wisdom, his justice, his insight, his compassion.

III. CHRIST'S AUTHORITATIVE TEACHING PRODUCED A PROFOUND IMPRESSION. This is described as astonishment, amazement. The novelty of the style, the tone, the matter, of our Lord's teaching, to some extent accounts for this. The unprecedented

power of his discourse was, however, the chief cause of this general wonder. There were occasions when astonishment led to repugnance, and the people would fain shun the presence of One so awful; but there were instances in which astonishment glowed into admiration and kindled into faith. And this last is the proper and intended result. If we are to have a Teacher, let us welcome One who speaks with authority; if we are to have a Saviour, who so fit as One mighty to save? if we are to submit to a Lord, a King, may it be One whose right it is to reign!

Ver. 22.—“*Having authority.*” St. Mark’s Gospel has been characterized as the Gospel for the Romans, as the Gospel of Power, as the Gospel of the Resurrection. The symbol denoting this second evangelist is the lion. There has always been a feeling that the dignity and majesty, the might and victory, of Emmanuel are in an especial manner set before the reader in this one of the four Gospels. Certainly the first chapter strikes the key-note of this strain. Jesus appears as the mysterious Lord, who with authority summons fishermen to forsake their nets and follow him; who teaches with authority in the synagogues, and awakens the amazement of his hearers; who with authority commands the unclean spirits, and they obey him; whose authority rebukes the fever and heals the leprosy; who by the magnetism of his power and love gathers the people from every quarter into his gracious presence, to hear his authoritative voice, and to receive a thousand blessings from his beneficent and powerful hands. In one word, he appears before us, at the very outset of his ministry, as “One that had authority.”

I. HOW CHRIST’S AUTHORITY WAS ASSERTED. That we may understand that Christ claims authority, we must refer to the gospel narrative, in which his words are recorded, his character delineated, and his ministry related. Does he assert authority? Is he such a Being that his claims demand attention? Was his authority for a season only, or was it intended to subsist through all time and in eternity? Was his an authority local in its range, or universal as the presence of mankind on earth? That Christ possessed and exercised authority during his earthly ministry admits of no dispute or question. *Satan* himself confessed it; for Jesus spurned his assumptions, resisted his temptations, and sent him who claimed the lordship of the earth defeated and uncrowned from his holy and authoritative presence. *Angels* recognized it; for they came to minister to his wants, and stood in countless legions ready, at a word, to rescue and to honour him. *Demons* felt it, and quailed beneath his glance, did homage to his supremacy, and fled at his rebuke. *Nature* knew it; and the winds were hushed and the sea was calmed at his authoritative word, bread multiplied in his hand, and water at his bidding turned to wine, trees withered at his breath, the very grave gave up its dead at his command, and the gentle air floated his gracious form to heaven. His *enemies* were conscious of his superiority; for they were abashed and silenced by his reasoning, they fell backward at his look. *Men* generally acknowledged him to be other and higher than themselves; “Never man,” said the officers sent to apprehend him—“never man spake like this man;” Pilate and Pilate’s wife were under the mysterious spell of his Divine authority; and the Roman centurion was constrained to exclaim, “Truly this was the Son of God!” His *friends* were sensible that he was so them more than a friend; at his summons they forsook their callings and their homes, they attempted impossibilities with confidence, they consecrated their powers and they hazarded their lives for the mission to which he called them. But he had greater witness than that of man. The works which he performed, they testified to him. The seal of God was set upon his actions. The voice of God honoured the Holy One and Just; heaven itself was opened, and from the excellent glory came the attestation and the approval of the Most High, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!” and there was added the demand which sanctions the authority of Emmanuel over universal man, “Hear ye him!” The Jews sometimes felt that Jesus of Nazareth was laying claim to a special and unrivalled authority. His bold and thorough *cleansing of the temple* is a case in point. How came he to take upon himself so remarkable a function as this? Who was he that he should do what none of the great officials ventured upon? We cannot wonder that “the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority?” The only explanation was that

Jesus was lord of the temple because he was the Son of God. And this lordship he asserted when he predicted the destruction of the material sanctuary, and when he, using it as a symbol of his body, foretold the rebuilding of the temple of God in three short days. Another case in point is his *assumption of the Divine prerogative of pardoning sin*. When Jesus publicly assured the believing paralytic that his sins were forgiven, this language aroused the indignation of the scribes and Pharisees. "This man blasphemeth! Who can forgive sins but God only?" The only reply of our Saviour to these insinuations was the performance of a miracle, that, as he phrased it, "they might know that the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins."

II. UPON WHAT IS CHRIST'S AUTHORITY BASED? It is not all authority which the enlightened and the free, the honourable and the just, can regard with reverence. Much that bears the name may fairly be treated as usurpation. And even just authority may deserve only a partial reverence; it may be admitted, but admitted with reserve. Authority is of different kinds, for it rests on different bases. The authority of the tyrant over his subjects, of the conqueror over the vanquished, rests on force and fear; the authority of the priest over the devotee rests on superstition and assumption; but the authority of the teacher over the scholar is the authority of wisdom, and that of the parent over the child is the authority of care and love. There is authority which is natural, and authority which is conventional. Some authority it is virtue to recognize; other authority it is baseness and dishonour not to resist. Authority is excellent and admirable when there is a right to command, when there is an obligation to submit and to obey. To understand aright the authority of the Lord Jesus, we must divest our minds of their habitual notions of civil authority. Government is not only right, it is necessary, it is ordained of God. But it has regard only to human actions. It is not the business of the civil ruler to influence men's beliefs upon science, or philosophy, or religion, but to induce them to industry, independence, order, and peaceableness. And the sanctions governors employ are not so much moral as external and physical. Fine, imprisonment, death,—these are their weapons. Occasionally rewards, in the shape of distinctions and honours, may be added, but the system is mainly one of penalty. A submission to Christ's authority is nothing if it is not willing, cheerful, cordial. Too often human authority is asserted with harshness, is acknowledged with slavishness. None of our Redeemer's subjects bow the knee whilst the heart is unyielded, offer the homage of the voice whilst the spirit is in rebellion. Men may do this under some influences; but let them not be deceived; it is the authority of men to which they bow, not that of Christ! By virtue of what quality, of what possession, had Jesus Christ authority? For us there is one great and all-sufficient answer—*He was the Son of God*. It was upon this ground that he based his own claims. "I and my Father," said he, "are one." "Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest! because I said, I am the Son of God?" "The works which My Father hath given me to do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." In fact, Christ so often and so plainly asserted his unique authority that he came to refuse any further explanations or formal claims. He answered inquiry by inquiry, and boldly declared, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." Truth has authority over man's understanding, and Christ's words, his declarations and revelations, have the *authority of truth*. He claimed to have told them the truth which he had heard of God. Our nature is framed to recognize and to rest in truth; and, since Christ is "the Truth," he is exactly adapted to our mental necessities and desires, to afford them full and final satisfaction. Christ wields the *authority attaching to a holy and benevolent character*. The human heart always renders homage to goodness, though there may be motives which prevent that homage being manifested and expressed. We instinctively honour and reverence those whom we feel to be better than ourselves. Now, in the case of our Saviour, it was Divine, incarnate goodness which appeared before men and moved among them. A perfect man, he went about doing good; and, both by his pure and gentle character, and by his unselfish, compassionate life, he commanded the reverence and constrained the allegiance of men. An authority this far nobler and worthier than that derived from a splendid retinue and a glittering throne, a mighty army and a sounding name. The conscience of the Christian acknowledges the claims of the sinless Emmanuel. The heart confesses the unrivalled authority of his tender pity, his unselfish love. Power,

apart from righteousness, enkindles resentment and arouses resistance. But goodness and benevolence, with the resources of Omnipotence at their command, summon our hearts to a willing surrender and our lives to a glad obedience. Our will, our whole nature, acknowledge the *authority of the Saviour's law*. When he was upon earth his disciples obeyed unquestioningly the mandates they could not always understand, and undertook with alacrity service for which they felt themselves utterly unqualified. And each awakened and enlightened hearer of the gospel gives utterance to his foremost and earnest desire in the words of the trembling rabbi of Tarsus, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" When once we know ourselves and him, we feel that none other has the right to our loyalty, our love, our devotion. When we hear his voice, it carries with it its own authority to our heart.

III. OVER WHOM CHRIST'S AUTHORITY EXTENDS. The answer to this question is suggested by what has been already said regarding the instruments, so to speak, of the dominion of Jesus Christ. If truth and righteousness, love and sacrifice—spiritual influence, in a word—be the source of his authority, we feel at once that his reign is not primarily and chiefly one over actions and observances. It is far more deep-seated and efficient, far more adapted to the moral nature of man and the moral authority of God. Christ's authority is *over the spiritual nature of man, and it is supported by spiritual sanctions*. Not so much what men do, as what they are, and why they act, and how they feel, is of interest to the Lord of hearts. His appeal is to what is intellectual, to what is moral, in man. It is not his aim to induce men to wear one uniform, to utter one cry, but rather to share one spirit—his own, to live one life—that of God. He designs to bring every thought into captivity unto obedience to Jesus Christ. Yet it is important to remember that, constituted as man is, it is impossible that he should acknowledge an authority over his conscience and heart which will have no sway over the actions and habits of his life. The individual life will be cast into the mould of Christ's mind and will. Society will own practically the rightful and controlling sway of Jesus. "All power is given unto him."

IV. THE ADVANTAGES WHICH CHRIST'S AUTHORITY SECURES. Is it to be desired that the authority of the Saviour should be generally and indeed universally acknowledged? What are the fruits of obedience? what the influences of his reign? Are they such that we may look forward with hope and prayer to the submission and subjection of mankind to him whom we "call Master and Lord"? When the authority of the Saviour has been acknowledged by the soul, and when he is habitually exercising this authority over the whole nature, the results are most blessed. Happiness is not in wilfulness and unbridled licence, but in subjection to a Law, holy, approved, and willingly accepted. This is true liberty, when the soul finds an authority it can bow before and obey with the harmony of all its faculties. Christ's is the perfect law of liberty, and where this prevails and reigns there is peace and joy; for there freedom and obedience are one, yoked together by spiritual and most welcome bonds. The widespread and universal acknowledgment of the Redeemer's authority is the one hope for the world's future. No thoughtful man can look forward to a universal empire of force, to the prevalence of a supreme military authority. What, then, is to put an end to wars and fightings amongst men? They are not for ever to afflict and curse the world. It is only in the reign of righteousness and benevolence that the dreams of poets shall be realized, the forecastings of prophets fulfilled, and the prayers of saints shall be answered. "In the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

V. HOW THIS AUTHORITY OF CHRIST AFFECTS THOSE WHO HEAR THE GOSPEL. To some the authority of the Redeemer may be an unwelcome theme. They would rather hear of his grace than of his dominion. Yet it is well to see and feel that each is essential to the other in a perfect and Divine Saviour. Instruction, to be satisfactory, must be authoritative. Consolation comes most effectually from him who wields the sceptre of dominion, and who is able to rebuke and to master all our foes and to sanctify all our trials. Many hearers of the gospel in these days think little of the rightful and supreme authority of the Lord Christ. Preachers and writers of religious books are accustomed to lay great stress upon the love of the Redeemer, and to spend their energies in inducing sinful, weak, needy hearts to respond to Christ's love, and to accept his salvation. And this is quite right. But it is not right to overlook the just

claim of Christ upon the faith and obedience of men, to keep out of sight the truth that men have no right to disbelieve and disobey the Son of God. No doubt it is for our interest and our happiness to be Christians. It is also our sin and our shame if we are not Christians. There have been parents among the poor who have thought that they were doing the teachers in Sunday schools a favour in sending their children to receive religious instruction; and this notion has arisen from the extreme and benevolent desire of teachers to bring the young into their classes. And in like manner it seems that there are many persons who think that they are quite at liberty to receive the Saviour or to reject him; that if they welcome the gospel and seek the fellowship of a Christian Church they will be bestowing an important favour upon those who present to them the invitations of the gospel. But, as the child renders no favour in doing his father's will, as the poor man renders no favour in accepting the bounty of his benefactor, as the subject renders no favour in obeying his country's laws, so the sinner, in listening to the gospel, obeying its summons and submitting to the Son of God, is far from rendering a favour. He is receiving a gift in his abject poverty; he is passing from the prison doors into light and liberty; he is acknowledging the just authority of an omnipotent Friend—a Saviour, not only gracious, but supreme, Divine!

Vers. 23—28.—*Christ's authority over spirits.* After a condensed narrative of the events introductory to our Lord's ministry, Mark proceeds to relate, in circumstantial detail, miracles performed in Capernaum and the neighbourhood, forming a cycle of the greatest importance; for by these miracles the interest of the population of Galilee was excited, whilst the hostility of the scribes and Pharisees was gradually aroused. Mark's is the Gospel of Power—his emblem is the lion. He tells the story of Christ's miraculous ministry with marvellous vigour and minuteness. The first miracle he records is the dispossession of a demon, impure and violent, yet unable to resist the authority of the Lord of the universe. This is well put in the forefront of the battle.

I. CHRIST'S AUTHORITY IS ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE SPIRIT. 1. Not willingly, but of constraint. The demon recognizes, in the great Healer and Master, the "Holy One of God," *i.e.* the Messiah. Shrinking from his presence—anxious to avoid the encounter—the evil spirit nevertheless covers before the Lord. When multitudes of the race which Jesus came to save knew him not, neither confessed his rightful claim, this demon was compelled to cry, "I know thee who thou art!" Happy omen for humanity—the foe of God and man recognizes the irresistible Warrior and Conqueror! 2. There is an anticipation of the issue of the conflict, "Art thou come to destroy us?" What prescience is here! Scribes and Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians, Jews and Romans, persuade themselves that they can destroy the Son of man. The demons know that the Son of man is their Destroyer! It is a just description of the Saviour's work—he comes to "destroy the works of the devil," to vanquish the foe, to cancel the sin, to release the sinner, to restore the captive of Satan to the liberty of the servant of the Lord.

II. CHRIST'S AUTHORITY IS ASSERTED AND EXERCISED BY HIMSELF. Salvation involves antagonism: the bondman can only be released by the defeat of the tyrant; the strong man must be bound that the spoil may be recovered. The Lord Jesus had met with and vanquished the prince of evil; he was now to contend with his servants. Accordingly, Christ, who rebuked the winds and the waves—elements producing discord in nature—rebukes also the evil and unclean spirit. It is a witness that the soul of man is not the fit and divinely ordered home and dwelling of the agents of the power of evil. Silence! Hence! Begone!—such is the bidding of Heaven to the emissaries of hell found encroaching upon the domain which is not theirs.

III. CHRIST'S AUTHORITY IS PRACTICALLY SHOWN AND PROVED. The unclean spirit is reluctant to quit his hold upon his prey. Satan cannot see his subjects liberated and his empire wane without resistance and resentment. But there is no withstanding the power of Emmanuel. The struggle is apparent in the convulsions with which the frame of the possessed is torn, and in the cry of anguish which is forced from his lips. But there is only one issue possible. The demon quails beneath the Master's eye, shudders at the Master's voice, and yields. Oh, happy omen of a great salvation! How often is this illustration of Christ's delivering power to be repeated in the Divine ministry, and through the dispensation of redemption and of grace!

IV. CHRIST'S AUTHORITY IS ADMITTED WITH AMAZEMENT. The rendering of the revisers is full of meaning and vivacity: "What is this? a new teaching!" or, as others read, "A new doctrine with authority!" The point is that miracle and doctrine are justly regarded as one and the same. The listeners to his discourses felt the authority of his words; the spectators of his miracles felt the authority of his works. We distinguish between the two, but Christ's contemporaries evidently saw the identity more clearly than the diversity. From his teaching they learned that the authority of his miracles was that of a wise and holy Being; from his beneficent miracles they inferred that all his Divine lessons were fraught with a heavenly energy, and proceeded from the mind of God. Their minds were evidently incited to inquiry, to consideration, to reflection. Who will not bow before an authority so just and so Divine as this?

V. CHRIST'S AUTHORITY BECAME THE THEME OF WIDESPREAD INTEREST AND FAME. Mark puts this dispossession of the demoniac forward as the first great miracle of this cycle, and represents it as the means of diffusing throughout Galilee an interest in the ministry of our Lord. Jesus thus became known as a Teacher, as a Saviour, as a Being of compassion and grace. Tidings of such a Prophet, of such a Benefactor, could not be other than a gospel to Israel and to mankind. What sacred and grateful and tender associations would mingle with the people's memories and thoughts and expectations regarding Jesus of Nazareth!

APPLICATION. 1. Behold a picture of the power of Satan and of sin over the nature of man. 2. Behold a proof of the authority of Christ, when he enters upon a struggle with the power of darkness dwelling in human spirits. 3. Learn a lesson of encouragement as to the personal and universal results of the great moral conflict of the world.

Vers. 29—31.—Christ's domestic ministry. Wherever Jesus went and amongst whomsoever, he took with him a heart sensitive to the appeal of human need, suffering, and sin; he took with him a hand open to give, stretched out to help and deliver. In city and country, among Jews and foreigners, with high and low, in the society of men, women, and children, he was always the same—the Helper, the Comforter, the Healer, the Friend of man. For the brief but pictorial and tender narrative in these verses we are doubtless indebted to the memory of the grateful Peter, himself a witness of the miracle, and one who profited by it in his own family and household.

I. THE DISCIPLES SOON REAP THE REWARD OF THEIR OBEDIENCE AND SELF-SACRIFICE. How readily had they responded to the Master's call, "Follow me"! How readily had they left their boats and fishing-nets, their daily occupations and their gains! So they had come into close relations with Jesus; so he became a guest in Simon's house. This led to the miracle here recorded, in which the Lord more than recompensed them for any loss they might have incurred. Christ often calls upon us for some self-denial and sacrifice; but he never does other than reward a hundredfold, even in this time, those who obey.

II. PETER LEARNS A LESSON OF HIS MASTER'S POWER AND WILLINGNESS TO SAVE. We know enough of Simon to understand that his nature was very receptive of impressions, very responsive to sympathy. What a lesson for him was this—which the Saviour vouchsafed to teach him so early in his discipleship—of the compassion and grace of his Lord! And what a preparation for the apostolate, yet so far in the future! First impressions are often the strongest. And we know that of all the twelve Peter was, in the course of the Lord's ministry, the first to confess his Divine dignity and Messiahship. Surely this was the maturity of the seed now sown at Capernaum.

III. CHRIST PROVES HIS SYMPATHY WITH HOME SUFFERINGS, AND BLESSES HOME LIFE. His ministry was indeed chiefly fulfilled in public; yet in the homes of Simon, of Levi, of Lazarus, he proved his interest in the domestic life of his friends. He entered into family feeling, and consecrated family life. It was sometimes said to him, "He whom thou lovest is sick." It was an appeal to which he was never indifferent. Christ is ever mindful of our family cares and anxieties, sorrows and joys. Let him "abide with us," and he will lighten our dwellings when they are clouded with trouble and with grief. When, like Simon's household, we "tell him" of the need and sorrow of those we love, his help is near.

IV. CHRIST EXERCISES HIS DIVINE POWER TO BANISH DISEASE. The action of our

Lord in performing this miracle deserves attention. He does not stand at a distance and utter words of exorcism, banishing the fever with an authoritative rebuke. Quite the reverse, he takes the sufferer by the hand and raises her up. An illustration of our Saviour's personal ministry, of the way in which he has ever come into contact with individual cases of need, of his tender and yet authoritative manner. It is not the religion of Christ, it is Christ himself who saves. And he ever saves by stretching forth the hand of help, and raising, elevating, the suppliant and penitent from the prostration and helplessness of sin. As the fever left this suffering woman, so all spiritual malady is banished at the bidding of a mighty, gracious Saviour.

V. AFFECTIONATE GRATITUDE PROMPTS TO PERSONAL SERVICE AND MINISTRATION. If our Lord made this house his home in Capernaum, Peter's mother-in-law must have had many opportunities of showing her thankfulness and love. Like many other devoted women, she took pleasure in showing how highly she honoured and how gratefully she loved her Lord. It is a law of moral life that those who are aided, healed, and pardoned shall love him to whom they owe so much; and shall show their love by grateful ministrations. They may not have the opportunity of ministering to Christ in the body; but the principle he propounds is this, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. Let us, like Simon, welcome Christ into our houses, our homes. 2. Let us, like this household, tell the Saviour of those members of the family who have special need of him. 3. Let us place all confidence in Christ's power and willingness to bless. 4. Let us, healed and pardoned by Christ's grace, take every opportunity of showing our gratitude, by engaging in his service; and, by ministering to his people, let us minister to him.

Vers. 32—34.—*The Healer of multitudes.* It was the hallowed evening of a memorable day. The Lord Jesus had taught in the synagogue, consecrating the sabbath by worship and by spiritual instruction, and creating in the popular mind an impression of his unique authority. He had cast out the demon from a wretched sufferer; he had healed Simon's wife's mother of a raging fever;—all these instances of his power were related through the dwellings of Capernaum, and the popular excitement was great. No wonder that at sunset, when the sabbath was over, and it was lawful to do so, the multitude sought out the sick and maimed among their kindred and companions, and the miserable demoniacs; brought them to the house of Simon, where Jesus was staying; and entreated the compassion and the succour of the Prophet of Nazareth.

I. In the sufferers brought to Jesus we have A REPRESENTATION OF THE WIDESPREAD AND VARIOUS ILLS THAT AFFLICT MANKIND. If all the diseased and mentally afflicted of any town were brought together to one spot, what a distressing scene would be exhibited! When the sick and the demoniacs of Capernaum were gathered together on that sabbath evening, they may be said to have exemplified the state of our sin-stricken humanity. To him who looks below the surface, this human race, apart from Christ, offers a spectacle with which no hospital, no pest-house, could compare. Moral disorders, Satanic influences, display themselves in a thousand forms, each having its own loathsomeness, its own anguish, its own curse. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint," etc. Fever, leprosy, palsy, possession,—each may indicate some special aspect of sin.

II. In the conduct of those who brought the sufferers to Christ we have A REPRESENTATION OF THE BENEVOLENT MINISTRATIONS OF THE CHURCH. There were those who had neither strength, knowledge, nor courage to come of themselves to Christ; their pitying and thoughtful friends led or carried them into his sacred presence. So the Church, which cannot of itself save the world, may nevertheless bring the multitudes unto Christ, may, in a sense, bring Christ to the multitude. An honourable vocation this—to lead the morally disordered and distressed into the presence of the Divine Healer, of him who said, "The whole need not a physician, but those who are sick. I am come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Some by preaching, some by private ministrations, some by example, and some by precept,—all in the same spirit of compassion for perishing souls, may lead sinners to the Redeemer.

III. In the multitude we discern A FORECAST AND EARNEST OF THE APPROACH OF

SIN-STRIKEN HUMANITY TO THE SAVIOUR. What a sight—"all the city gathered together at the door" of Jesus! Men are learning the powerlessness of every other helper, the hopelessness of every other refuge and confidence. Heathenism and Mohammedanism are proving the futility of their claims; infidelity and atheism are showing that they can render no real service to mankind. At the same time, men are learning that, whilst there is salvation in no other, there is salvation in him. And they shall come, flocking like doves to his windows, like pilgrims from the east and from the west to his shrine, until this vast humanity shall gather into the presence, implore the aid, and know the power of the Divine Redeemer.

IV. In the cures effected we have AN EXEMPLIFICATION OF THE ACTUAL POWER OF THE SAVIOUR TO HEAL AND BLESS. The evangelist does not here dwell upon details, but he mentions two great classes of patients, the diseased and the demoniacs. Over sufferers in mind and body the Lord Jesus displayed his healing authority and grace. There was no case beyond his power. The faith of the applicants was rewarded, the report of their friends was justified, the authority of the Saviour was exemplified, the fame of his ministry was confirmed and extended. What happy households were to be found in Capernaum that night, which had long known pain, anxiety, and despondency! An encouragement surely, to all afflicted by the bondage and the curse of sin, to apply to Jesus for relief, for forgiveness, and for blessing. It does not matter what form your spiritual need and suffering have assumed; it does not matter for what length of time you have been the slave of sin; if you come to Christ you shall surely learn that "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." The purpose of our Saviour's advent and mediation includes all cases of sin and need. The power of the Redeemer is unlimited. The compassion of Jesus is unexhausted. As of old, "he has compassion on the multitudes." The promises of our Lord are large enough to include every case. "Come unto me, all ye," etc.

Vers. 35—39.—Prayer and work. We are told concerning our Divine Lord, that "it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren." This indeed is implied in his designation, "Son of man." Our nature is both contemplative and active; the life of a religious man is distinguished alike by devout meditation and communion with God, and by consecrated and energetic labour in God's service. It was the same with our great Leader. The passage before us presents the Lord Jesus in both these aspects, both in prayer and in work.

I. CHRIST'S PRAYER. It is recorded that, at several crises in our Saviour's ministry, he prayed. 1. As to the *character* of Christ's prayers, we know that they were unlike ours in that they could not contain confession, contrition, and repentance; and they were like ours in containing thanksgivings, and also as expressing filial communion and uttering supplication. 2. As to the *occasion* of Christ's prayers, it is the fact that special mention is made of our Lord's appeals to the Father, in connection with the more solemn and significant acts of his ministry. So here, it was in the midst of publicity, of widespread interest, of strenuous labours, that Jesus prayed. 3. The *time* chosen is remarkable. Very early in the morning, before the stir and movement of daily life began, the early, waking, morning hour was consecrated to fellowship with the Father. 4. The *scene* of this prayer is observable. Jesus sought seclusion; he retired to a desert place. It is possible and it is desirable to pray in the assemblies of saints, and to pray in the crowded thoroughfares, to him who seeth in secret. Yet there is appropriateness in retirement and seclusion for special supplications in seasons of special need. The prayer offered on this occasion could not be put upon record, for it was offered in solitude. We know from the "intercessory prayer" recorded by John how fervently our Lord could pray. On this occasion he must have sought strength for the Galilean ministry, and a blessing upon the people, who were more ready to behold his miracles and to profit by them than they were to imbibe his spirit and receive his teaching.

II. CHRIST'S WORK. The prayer occupied the early morning, but the day was to be spent in toil. Our Lord's example gives no countenance to the practice of those who deem the beginning and the end of religion to consist in devotions. **Prayer fits for work, and work necessitates prayer.** 1. Christ's labours were *suggested by men's needs and entreaties*. What he had done had stirred up hope within the breasts of others, and

"all men sought for him." Not always from the highest motives, yet with a faith and earnestness creditable to the suppliants, men sought Christ's help. 2. Christ's labours were regarded by him as *the fulfilment of Divine purposes*. "Therefore to this end came I forth." He did the will of the Father; this was his meat and drink. It gives dignity and happiness to our toil when we can regard it as the work which the Father has given us to do. 3. Christ's labours were prompted by a *universal and untiring benevolence*. There were "the next towns" to be visited; there was "all Galilee" to be evangelized. Only a large heart could take a survey so comprehensive, and cherish a compassion so vast. It was enough for him that sin and misery abounded; he had come "to seek and to save that which was lost." 4. Christ's works were *adapted to the many-sided nature and to the multiform needs of men*. Men were ignorant; he must teach them. Men were hopeless; he must cheer them with good tidings. Men were sick and suffering; he must relieve and heal them. Men were subject to Satanic sway; he must set them free. Men were sinful; he must pardon, cleanse, renew them.

III. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PRAYER AND WORK. 1. It is a *divinely appointed* connection. There are those who would have Christians confine themselves to prayer, who think that to attempt to work for the Lord is the same as taking matters out of his hands, who tell us that the Lord will carry out his counsels without our help. That God *can* do so we believe, but that he *will* do so is contrary to all his Word. On the other hand, there are those who sneer at prayer as unreasonable and useless, and who preach the gospel of work—of prayerless work—of work without any reference to him who gives the power and who assigns the aim of labour. The Scriptures direct us to conjoin the two. Christ gives us in his own person an example of the harmonious conjunction of both. 2. By prayer may be *discovered the exact work which Providence entrusts to us*. There is no better prayer for the beginning of the day than this, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" You may not clearly see what is the way of service in which the Lord would have you walk. There may open up before you two paths, and you may be uncertain which is that selected for you. In seeking to decide such questions, it is right to make use of your reason, and to take counsel of wise friends. Yet, whilst using human means, it is necessary to seek Divine guidance. "Commit thy way unto the Lord." A voice shall be heard saying, "This is the way; walk ye in it." Not by magic or miracle, but by clear indications of providence, the answer is given from above. 3. By prayer is gained *encouragement and strength for work*. The magnitude of the service may make us more conscious of the feebleness and ignorance of the servant. Our heart may sink within us as we contemplate our helplessness. But prayer can make the weakest strong. By prayer the impossible becomes the practicable. Prayer makes us feel that the power of Omnipotence is at our back. The fainting spirit is refreshed by communion with Heaven. The feeble arm is nerved for what seemed an unequal fight. The Holy Spirit—the Comforter, the Helper—is bestowed upon the suppliant, and his strength is no more his own, but God's. Then he exclaims, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

APPLICATION. 1. Let the hearers of the gospel remember that the work, the suffering, and the prayers of Christ were all for their salvation. 2. Let them imitate the spirit and conduct of those of whom we read that they sought Jesus: "All men seek for thee." If you wish to know the counsels of God, the preaching of Jesus will declare them to you. If you wish to experience the saving grace of God, you may through Christ find it for yourself. 3. Let the spirit of the Lord Jesus—his prayerfulness and his untiring zeal—serve as a model to every servant of his. Like him we must pray with sincerity, if like him we would work with diligence.

Ver. 37.—*Seeking Jesus*. "All are seeking thee." It is man's nature to seek. Men are seeking many things. Some things they seek and find, other things they seek in vain, whilst there are things they seek, first to find and then to lose again. The impulses of our constitution respond to the appeals made from without. There is a mysterious, *personal* attraction which renders some men the object of the quest of their fellows. But none has ever so been sought as was and is the Lord Jesus. Men, when spiritually awakened, attracted by the promises of the gospel and influenced by the Holy Spirit, seek for Christ, and, when they find him, find all things in him.

I. WHAT IN MEN LEADS THEM TO SEEK CHRIST? There are many motives inducing to this inquiry and endeavour, just as when Jesus was on earth. 1. *Curiosity* leads men to seek him. During our Lord's ministry, especially the earlier ministry in Galilee, there occurred, now and again, a *rush* to Jesus. Crowds followed him even into the deserts and the mountains. They came from far and near. And not only the populace, but the leaders of the people, were curious to see the Prophet of Nazareth; and Pharisees invited him to dine with them, and asked their friends to meet him. The novelty of Christianity no longer acts amongst our population; but in regions where the gospel is for the first time preached, this motive operates, and many "inquirers" are drawn, simply by their desire for some new thing, to seek a knowledge of the Saviour. 2. *Admiration* leads men to seek him. Even sinful men confess the beauty of holiness, and the young and ardent and aspiring feel the marvellous attraction of a character with which no other can be compared. There is so much of meanness and selfishness in humanity, that the presence upon earth of one morally noble and perfectly benevolent charms some choice and fervent souls, and draws them to our Lord. 3. *Need and suffering* lead men to seek him. When Jesus was on earth there came to him the hungry to be fed, the sick to be healed, the suffering to be relieved, the ignorant to be taught, the anxious to secure his interposition on behalf of their friends and comrades. Human want is perennial; and there are wants which the world can never supply, hearts the world can never fill. Where Jesus is known as the Dispenser of Divine compassion and bounty to the souls of men, men will be drawn to him.

"Far and wide, though all unknowing,
Pants for thee each mortal breast;
Human tears for thee are flowing,
Human hearts in thee would rest."

4. *Sin and a sense of ill desert and need of pardon* lead men to seek him. Sinners, who were repelled from the formal and self-righteous, were attracted to the gracious and compassionate Redeemer. Often from his lips issued the merciful and authoritative words, "Thy sins be forgiven thee!" Sin has not ceased; its burden and its curse are still felt. And there is none but Christ who has power upon earth to forgive sins. No wonder that men come to him. In him the sinner meets with the pity of a tender heart and the authority of a Divine power.

II. WHAT IN CHRIST LEADS MEN TO SEEK HIM? 1. Foremost must be placed the fact that *he seeks them*. He came to seek and to save the lost. Had he not first come forth upon this quest, never would the needy and sinful children of men have gone forth to meet him. If "we love him because he first loved us," we have sought him because he first sought us. 2. *His invitations and promises*. He has both bidden men seek his help, and has assured them that they shall not seek in vain. "Come unto me" is his invitation; and the assurance is added, "Ye shall find rest unto your souls." 3. His *power to respond to their appeals*, and to satisfy their wants. They who seek and find not are discouraged from further quest. It is never thus with those who apply to Jesus. Here the words hold good, "Seek, and ye shall find." 4. His *benevolent disposition* renders it easy and congenial for those who seek good gifts to seek them here at the hands of Jesus; for in seeking him, the suppliant is seeking the gifts of his hands as well as the love of his heart. And our need and urgency are exceeded by his readiness to confer all real blessings.

APPLICATION. *How should men seek Christ?* 1. Sincerely and seriously. The sincere soul will seek, not his merely, but himself. 2. In faith, not as doubting whether he may now be found, but as assured of his spiritual nearness. 3. Seasonably, which is as much as to say, at once. "Now is the accepted time." We need him now, therefore we should seek him now. 4. Perseveringly, "watching daily at his gates." It is a life-long quest, and, though he be found to-day, none the less must he be sought to-morrow. The "seeking" must be continued, until we see him as he is.

Vers. 40—45.—The leper healed. Among the many miracles wrought by the Divine Physician upon the bodies and minds of suffering mankind, the evangelists have selected certain as types of the Saviour's spiritual work, as well as illustrations of his beneficent ministry. Every class of sufferers seems to represent some special aspect of

sin and need, and every recorded miracle seems to convey some special lesson concerning the Healer's grace and power. Let this narrative be thus regarded, and we find here—

I. A SYMBOL OF HUMAN SIN AND MISERY. Leprosy was evidently so regarded among the Jews, and upon Divine authority, as is clear from the detailed directions given in Leviticus for its treatment by the priests. A loathsome, spreading, and generally incurable disease, leprosy was regarded with universal repugnance and disgust, and lepers were excluded from ordinary human society and banished from ordinary human dwellings. This disease, therefore, has always been regarded as emblematical of sin, which lays hold of man's moral nature, cripples and disables it, spreads to every department of his being, and is by human means altogether incurable. It renders the subject of it unfit for the society of holy beings, and unworthy of a place in the Church of the living God.

II. The conduct of this leper is AN EXAMPLE OF BELIEVING APPLICATION TO CHRIST. We observe: 1. *Approach* to the Saviour. Though lepers were not permitted to come unto the neighbourhood of their fellow-men, this man drew near to Jesus, with the boldness inspired by necessity and hope. 2. There was *reverence*. He knelt, he fell on his face, he worshipped the Master; thus evincing his sense of inferiority and need, and his conviction of Christ's authority. 3. There was *faith*; for his language implies this, "Thou canst make me clean." Not perfect faith, but sincere and in accordance with what he had heard of the great Healer. 4. There was *entreaty*. He besought Jesus, as one who felt that here was his only hope, "Hers I live, or here I die."

III. The record describes CHRIST'S POWER TO SAVE. The unusual fulness of the narrative gives us an insight into the movements and operations of Divine mercy. 1. Our Lord's action is traced to *compassion*, which stirred within his Divine heart—the source of all our salvation, the ground of all our hope. 2. *Contact* with the sufferer was the means and the symbol of healing. What Naaman expected Elisha to do to him, that Jesus did to this sufferer—laid his hands upon the place, and recovered the leper. How often is our Saviour represented as thus condescendingly and compassionately coming into personal contact with the wretched and sinful! It is the spiritual touch of the Redeemer that heals the sinner's maladies and banishes his woes. 3. Jesus *exercises his authority*, utters his will, pronounces the sentence of release, "I will; be thou clean!" What simplicity, majesty, authority, in the Saviour's language! It is thus that he addresses every believing suppliant, that he rewards the faith of every lowly applicant. No voice but that Divine voice can give this assurance and pronounce this sentence of liberty. 4. *The healing is effected* by him who is Lord of nature. No failure attended the Saviour's ministry of compassion. The leper's doubt, if he had any, was as to Christ's willingness, not as to his power. The result proved that there was no deficiency in either. The leprosy departed, and the man was cleansed. Christ's is ever a full and complete salvation; for he is "mighty to save."

IV. THE SAVIOUR HERE SANCTIONS THE OPEN EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE. In bidding the cleansed leper go to the priest and present the customary offering, Jesus not only magnified the Law and conformed to custom, he also approved a grateful spirit, and commended the public acknowledgment of Divine mercy. It is well that we should "pay our vows unto the Most High," that we should "bring an offering, and come into his courts." He is the God who "healeth all our diseases," and every signal interposition on our behalf ought to be gratefully and publicly acknowledged.

V. We remark in this narrative the working of AN IMPULSE TO OBLIBERATE AMONGST MEN THE MERCY OF GOD. Our Lord had reasons for enjoining silence upon this healed leper. Yet he would not be displeased with the grateful and benevolent spirit which led him to publish and blaze abroad the matter. Every Christian must exclaim, "The Lord hath done great things for me, whereof I am glad!" "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!"

VI. We see the issue of this miracle in THE INCREASING FAME OF CHRIST and the increasing number of applicants to him for relief and help. The tidings of this marvellous cure awakened such public attention to Christ's power and grace that he could not for a season fulfil his ministry in the crowded towns, but retired to secluded spots, where, however, he might well be sought and found by those who were drawn to him, not by an idle curiosity, but by a conviction of his power and grace, and by the urgency of conscious need.

Ver. 41.—“Moved with compassion.” There is something in human nature which draws men towards the great, the powerful, the prosperous—an impulse not altogether good. And there is something which attracts men towards the good and pure—a holy and admirable impulse. But there is yet another tendency, which impels souls towards the needy, the sorrowful, the sinful; and this is all Divine. For “God has gladness for those who are glad, and pity for those who are sad.” We see this last-named impulse, in all its beauty and power, in the character and the ministry of Emmanuel.

I. THE IMPULSE OF COMPASSION WITHIN THE SOUL OF JESUS. 1. Observe what excited this emotion; it was ever the too familiar spectacle of human want and suffering, trouble and sin. *Passio* leads to *compassio*. Moving about among the people and accessible to all comers, Jesus could not but meet with innumerable cases of human misery, fitted to excite feelings of profoundest pity. The helpless babe, the untaught and neglected multitude, the powerless paralytic, the loathsome leper, the foaming lunatic, the furious demoniac, the crippled beggar, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the bereaved widow, the mourning sister, the sinful woman, the dying thief,—all these alike were the objects of Christ’s commiseration and sympathy. 2. Ponder the emotion itself. To some minds it seems that to attribute such feeling to Deity derogates from the dignity of God. But Christianity reveals to us something nobler, and worthier of our worship and our love, than an impassive and impersonal Law presiding over the destinies of the universe. If the Old Testament represents in words the long-suffering and tender mercy of Jehovah, in the New Testament God in Christ lives among men, susceptible to all their wants and woes, touched with a feeling of their infirmities. If the Old Testament astonishes us by the declaration concerning God, “In all their afflictions he was afflicted,” the New Testament depicts one “moved with compassion,” who asserts, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

II. THE PRACTICAL EXPRESSION OF COMPASSION. Sentiment is divinely implanted in the human breast; but it is implanted as the root from which actions and habits corresponding with it are designed to grow. Those have been well denounced by the poet—

“Who, nursed in mealy-mouthed philanthropies,
Divorce the feeling from her mate, the deed.”

Compassion is represented in the text as a principle of action. The Lord Jesus did feel, he did sigh over, human sorrows, and groan over human unbelief, and weep over human ingratitude. But his feelings did not evaporate thus; they acted as the motive-power to deeds of charity and of helpfulness. When “moved with compassion,” Jesus “stretched forth his hand,” and healed, saved, and blessed the object of his gracious commiseration. He was not only tender to feel, he was mighty to save. The very names by which he is known are a monument of his practical compassion—he is the *Redeemer* and the *Saviour* of mankind.

III. THE HUMAN RESPONSE TO THE DIVINE COMPASSION OF CHRIST. A quality so beautiful in itself and so benignant in its operation cannot but exercise a mighty power over the whole nature of those for whose benefit it is displayed. Accordingly, we find that our Lord’s pity has exercised such a power in two directions. 1. Christ’s compassion becomes the spring of a new moral life in the hearts of his people. When Jesus brings to a soul gladness and peace, can it be matter of wonder that gratitude, love, and devotion become principles of a new nature, a new life? What more natural? “The love of Christ constraineth us.” 2. Christ’s compassion becomes the inspiration and the example of the compassion of his Church. It is not enough to admire; we are called to copy. Compassion is a “note” of the Christian life, a feeling to be cherished, a habit to be formed. Thus our Lord has introduced among men a new standard of virtue and a new type of character. If the influence of such parables as the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan has been great, what must have been the influence exercised by the incarnation and the sacrifice of Christ? The function and office of the redeemed Church of Emmanuel is, being moved with compassion, to minister unto mankind, and to bring the weary, the suffering, and the sinful unto him who never breaks the bruised reed nor quenches smoking flax.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—“*The beginning of the gospel.*” Very simple and natural. There is hardly any preface. The narrator seems impatient to get into the very heart of his subject. This should ever be the instinct of the preacher. Ingenuously, yet with perfect inductive force, he shows that Christianity claims respect and acceptance as being connected with the highest aspirations and purest sentiments of morality.

I. THE SUBJECT STATED. “The gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” This title, if title it ought to be called, is very full and felicitous. It is Jesus who is the great subject of the “gospel.” The latter is used here in a transitional sense, *i.e.* not simply of “good news,” or “glad tidings,” but rather of “account,” “history,” of the great facts of salvation. 1. *The gospel concerns a great Personality.* His name, which was to be “as ointment poured forth,” is twofold. Jesus is his ordinary human name; his official dignity is indicated by the term “Christ” or “the Christ,” *i.e.* the Anointed. As Messiah, he occupied relations more than human, and therefore the addendum (supported by preponderating manuscript authority), “the Son of God.” The Hope of Israel was, if prophetic language is subject to reasonable canons of interpretation, more than a saint or a seer; he was partaker of the Divine nature as truly as of the human, and thus fitted to mediate between the Father and his alienated children. 2. *The existence and gradual manifestation of this Person are of great and glad some consequence to the world.* It is worth while to know what he was, did, and suffered, as thereby may be discovered the meaning and the method of salvation. For this reason the account of them is preserved and commended to men.

II. UNDER WHAT ASPECT IT IS REGARDED. As something coming into existence, beginning to be, in time. We are invited, so to speak, to consider how it grew. The greatest religions have not been sudden inventions. Christianity is no exception to the rule. The interest of the mind is excited by the prospect of tracing the genesis of so great and so remarkable a phenomenon, as one might seek to follow a river to its source, or speculate as to the origin of a world. One knows, must know, more about the nature of a thing when it is thus studied. But it would be easy to lose one's self in curious conjecture, in myth and legend of the prehistoric past, without any extension of actual knowledge. In the various ways in which the evangelists account for or trace out the origin of the gospel, there is always a use more or less apparent. In practical subjects speculative researches usually turn out to be aberrations. But Mark, who is the most realistic in his tendency of any of the New Testament writers, save perhaps James, contents himself with indicating proximate origins, but in such a way as to suggest in the strongest possible way the supernatural as the only possible explanation or key. 1. *It was foretold.* The coming of this Person was the chief burden of prophecy. He was the Hope of the ages. The many statements of the prophets are, however, passed over by Mark in favour of two, one being introductory (ver. 2) and the other of chief importance (ver. 3). It is said, “in Isaiah the prophet,” because the attention of the writer went through and beyond the first quotation, which is from Malachi, and riveted itself upon the second, from Isaiah. That such words should have been spoken so long ago was a proof of the Divine character of Christ's mission. 2. *Moral preparation was needed for it.* John the Baptist's work was a preparatory one, upon the heart and conscience. As a whole it is termed, from its chief rite, “the baptism” of John; and its end was repentance. 3. *The personal preparation of its great subject was also essential.* His fulfilling of the Law in John's baptism, and his inward spiritual endowment and illumination, ensuring moral victory, spiritual maturity, and the fulness of the Messianic consciousness, are therefore described. All these are a very small portion of the whole gospel as given by Mark; he passes with light, firm touch over each, and then launches his readers upon the great river of Christ's doings and sayings, issuing inevitably, as he ever hints and suggests, in the tragedy of Golgotha. The fulness and intensity of the narrative sensibly increase as the great catastrophe is approached, and the end throws its light back upon the faintest and most obscure “beginning.”—M.

Vers 4—8.—*The ministry of John.* **I. OF WHAT IT CONSISTED.** In each Gospel the

descriptions are very general, and look as if they had been foreshortened in order to give due prominence to the gospel narrative that had to follow. Yet a fairly complete impression may be received of his main doctrines and rules of discipline. Generally in his ministry there are four elements discoverable. 1. *Exhortation*. A direct appeal to the moral sense, the chief note of which was "Repent." It is a sharp word often repeated, refinement upon it being likely only to dull its edge. It meant, primarily, "to think after another," then "to change one's mind or opinion," the faculty addressed being that of moral reflection (*noûs*). Accordingly we read of repentance "unto acknowledgment of the truth" (2 Tim. ii. 25), "toward God" (Acts xx. 21), "from dead works" (Heb. vi. 1), and "unto life" (Acts xi. 18), or "unto salvation" (2 Cor. vii. 10). The two last expressions correspond with that of Mark, "unto remission of sins." The idea involved is intellectual as well as moral, thought being exercised as well as feeling. The mind is to be twisted back upon itself; spiritual resolution is demanded according to new principles. "Take a right view of sin—your sin—and quit it." John thus prepared men for Christ by making them prepare themselves, casting down every imagination and every high thing that stood in the way the coming King was to use for his glorious "progress." 2. *Ceremony*. There was but one rite—baptism; not created for the occasion, but simply adopted out of the multifarious ceremonial of Judaism. Its use is explained by its symbolic suggestiveness of the spiritual change John sought to produce. The physical purifying set forth the spiritual, and was ineffectual without it. 3. *Example*. He himself was what he desired others to be. His habitat—the wilderness—was a protest against the corruption of the cities, and indeed of the whole social fabric. He dwelt apart, as being thus better able to seek God and serve him. His personality, too, was eloquent of the same truth. With clothing the coarsest and least comfortable, and food the simplest and cheapest, he maintained a strong, free, independent life, consecrated in Nazarite-like vows to God. 4. *Prophecy*. Not only a backward but also a forward look was implied in his teaching. It was by virtue of the coming of Another that all these moral acts were to be rendered valid and effectual. The atonement of Christ, as a prospective thing, is therefore the key-stone of all John's preaching. Not the baptism, the ascetic life, not even the "repentance," was in itself a saving principle. These only availed as they brought men to him who baptized not with water but with the Holy Spirit. His whole ministry did not confer, but simply prepared for, "the remission of sins."

II. ITS RELATIVE SIGNIFICANCE. It was, therefore, not of absolute or independent value, but only auxiliary to the advent of Christ. He stood midway between the Law and the Gospel. In this light, his recognition of the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" is at once the linking on of his ministry to Christ's, and its consummation and disappearance in it.

III. ITS RESULTS. Not substantive or permanent. A deep effect was produced upon Jewish life, but it did not last. Yet, in many instances, notably within the circle of the apostles, it was the preliminary stage, the "strait gate and narrow way," into the Divine life which Jesus brought. John's message exerted a far-reaching influence, thrilled the nation in all its classes and tribes, and then died away in ever fainter echoes, amidst the returning indifference or spiritual opposition to the Truth. It was not, therefore, useless; rather in the highest sense was it effectual only as it succeeded in making itself unnecessary for the further progress of those who received it. "He must increase, but I must decrease."—M.

Ver. 8.—*John's baptism and Christ's*. I. THE GRAND RELIGIOUS NEED OF MAN IS PURIFICATION. The existence of so many ceremonial religions is a presumption in favour of this. They all speak of offences in man which require expiation. But the knowledge of the true character of sin is revealed by the Law (Rom. iii. 19). Sin itself, of course, exists anterior to the knowledge of the Law of Moses, because of the "law of God written upon the heart." In Ps. xiv. the universal depravity of the Jews of the age in which the psalmist wrote is very absolutely declared; and St. Paul, in Rom. iii. 10, etc., quotes it freely, in proof that Jews as well as Gentiles are under the power of sin. "As his argument is at this point addressed particularly to the Jew, he reasons, not from the sense of sin or the voice of conscience, but from the Scriptures, whose authority the Jew acknowledged. The Jew would, of course, admit the inference as to the state of

the Gentile world" (Perowne). The first aim, therefore, of every real religion must be the removal of sin, because: 1. *The sense of guilt estranges man from God.* Under this feeling of alienation the heart hardens, and the tendency is to cast off the authority of all Divine sanctions. 2. *Indwelling sin corrupts and perverts the moral nature.* The vision of God is obscured, and as he is the Fountain of moral obligation and perception, moral distinctions become uncertain and confused. Right and truth are not desired for their own sakes; there is no genuine enthusiasm for them. On the contrary, the heart is already biased and bribed on behalf of evil. "Evil, be thou my good," expresses the final stage to which the corruption of the heart may attain; and: 3. *Sinful habit and inherited tendency enfeeble the will.* This moral weakness may coexist with the clearest perceptions of right and wrong (Rom vii. 14—19).

II. RELIGIOUS MINISTRIES ARE TO BE TESTED BY THEIR POWER TO EFFECT THIS. 1. *It is the general pretension which they make in common.* There may be supernatural evidences, etc., to recommend them, but the practical ground upon which they base their claim to reception is really that, in some way or other, they can settle the question of sin between man and God. To judge them upon this point is not, therefore, to do them an injustice. 2. *The standard is common and within human experience.* In the measure in which they wean man from sin and reconcile him to the Divine Being, they prove their ability to make good their pretension. A religion whose followers have low moral ideas, or are not in the habit of practising what they profess, must be discredited as a moral power. 3. *There are various respects in which this purifying power may show itself:* (1) Spiritual rest. This arises from a sense of forgiveness and of reconciliation with God. In other words, when the consciousness of guilt is removed and the sanctions of righteousness have been honoured, the soul is satisfied and loses its fear and dislike to God, trusting, and in time loving, him. (2) Moral inspiration. If sin has truly been overcome, and the relations of the soul with God are satisfactory, there will be hopefulness and vigour in the discharge of duty, resignation and patience in suffering, and a disposition to do good. (3) Change of character and conduct. He who did evil and delighted in it will then find his joy in righteousness and holiness. There will be manifest "the fruits of the Spirit," and there will be "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."

III. HOW THE SUPERIORITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IN THIS RESPECT IS TO BE EXPLAINED. 1. *Because it was spiritual and not ceremonial.* John anticipated the explanation in his prophecy concerning Christ. He was not, like himself, to baptize with water, but with the Holy Spirit. Now, John's baptism was most significant, perhaps the most significant of the rites of the ceremonial law. Enforced by his moral earnestness, it also exercised a powerful spiritual effect. But it did not produce that which he preached, viz. repentance, in any inward and enduring manner. It was only indirectly spiritual. Duty was powerfully suggested by the symbol, and, where spiritual influence was at work, in many instances a moral change was produced. But there was, so to speak, no command over that spiritual influence, no ensuring its operation upon the heart. What was needed was something that would go directly to the heart, and renew the moral nature. It is only in the communication of greater spiritual power than existed before that this can take place. A strong moral nature like John's was felt whilst it appealed to men, but, when its immediate influence was withdrawn, the impulses and emotions to which it gave rise died down again. Christ, on the other hand, furnished moral power in the communication of truth under vital and vivid representations. From the fulness of his own spiritual life also there was a constant overflowing of grace and strength. He spake as never man spake; his authority was felt; his example inspired. It was the meaning and spirit of everything he revealed. The conscience was strengthened, and the moral nature filled with new light and life. "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God" (John vi. 68). 2. *Because it was the communication of Divine life and power.* He "baptized with the Holy Ghost." An awful and mysterious expression. The Spirit of God was set free by the atoning work of the Saviour to operate upon the heart and conscience of man. By purifying the outward man John sought to impress men with the sense of their spiritual impurity, and their need of forgiveness and inward cleansing. But only Christ could give purity of heart. He gave life; he inspired. The inward man was renewed, "created after

God, in righteousness and true holiness." "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."—M.

Vers. 9—11.—The baptism of Jesus. One of many proofs of the wide influence of the Baptist's ministry. He came from Nazareth of Galilee. The multitudinous baptism of John was a fit occasion and background for the special and peculiar baptism of Jesus. The awakened national conscience represented for the nonce the general confession of sin by the individuals of mankind saved through the gospel. Christ's baptism was—

I. A FULFILMENT OF LEGAL RIGHTEOUSNESS. It was one ceremony of the Law taken as representative of the spirit and essence of the whole ceremonial system. Inasmuch as it involved a *confession of sin*, he by undergoing it (1) *humiliated himself*; and (2) *identified himself with the sinful nature of the race*. Whilst condemning in his pure spirit the sin of man, he yet takes his place with sinners, as one with them in their penalty and their hope.

II. A FULFILMENT OF SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS. 1. *Through plenary reception of the Holy Spirit.* This was the same Spirit in which he had already been living, but given now "without measure." Inspiration ensues upon conscious acts of obedience and righteousness; true spiritual baptism is given to those who submit willingly to the positive requirements of God's Law. This was (1) the completion of the Divine-human consciousness; and (2) the communion of God and man, of heaven and earth. The (violently and suddenly) rent heaven symbolized this. 2. *Through Divine attestation.* It was a voice to John, but much more to Jesus himself. Through this experience he realized that the attitude he had assumed, and the career upon which he was about to enter, were approved of his Father. The favour and acceptance therein declared were also, by implication, a recognition of his perfect personal purity. It was not as a sinner that he submitted to baptism, but as the sinner's Friend and intending Saviour.—M.

Vers. 12, 13.—The temptation. Great moral problems are suggested by the temptation. Mark does not describe the nature of it, but leaves the imagination and cognate experience of his readers to fill up the spaces, or, having a different object from the other evangelists, he, supposing the details furnished by them well known, contents himself with an epitome. But it is an epitome of a very vivid and pregnant kind. The salient points alluded to by him are—

I. THE PREDISPOSING CAUSE OF IT. The temptation, singularly enough, follows "straightway" upon the baptism, in such a way as to establish the fact of a close connection between the two events; and that Spirit which crowned with its descent the act of obedience is the direct cause of Christ's being tempted. Is not this inconsistent with what we learn of God from the Bible? He is not, we are told, tempted of evil, "neither tempteth he any man." 1. *It was necessary to the purpose of Christ's coming into the world that he should be tempted.* As a portion, therefore, of his mediatorial experience and perfecting, it was quite fitting that the Spirit, through whom he had come, should lead him forward to each chief point of trial in his career. It is conceivable that one should approach evil from the side of an evil heart already predisposed to yield. But it belongs to the virtue of Christ's position as one tempted that he was led into it by the Spirit. It was—to translate a part of the meaning of this into familiar speech—it was "from the highest motives" that he submitted to temptation. 2. *It was not the Spirit that tempted him, but it was through being in the condition induced by the indwelling of the Spirit that he became exposed to temptation in its most terrible forms.* It is only as being in a higher spiritual state than that to which one's circumstances correspond that they can be truly said to tempt him. The greatest temptations are revealed in the highest spiritual experience, even as darkness by light. We can never appreciate the power of Satan until we look at him from a state of holiness and devout illumination.

II. THE AGENT OF IT. Mark uses the peculiar word "Satan," instead of "the devil," as in the other Gospels. The choice of this term may have been determined by a desire to emphasize the special character of the devil as "the adversary" whom he was to overthrow, or simply by an instinctive sense that thereby the personality, and the identification of that personality with the historic Satanic principle of revelation, would be made clearer. It was with no secondary being that Jesus

wrestled, but with the prince of darkness himself. In such an encounter the conflict must needs be a duel, and even then was it determined beforehand in favour of the Son of God. But the allurements employed were necessarily of the most subtle and grandly representative character. It was a final trial of strength, upon which the future of salvation depended.

III. THE ASSOCIATIONS OF IT. *The forty days in the wilderness* reminded men of the similar fasts of Moses and Elijah. *The wild beasts* may have been an unconscious reproduction of the conditions of the Paradisaic temptation. *The society of the wilderness* was of the most contrastive and representative character: the Spirit—Satan; wild beasts—angels. As to the “wild beasts” (peculiar to Mark), Plumptre says, “In our Lord’s time these might include the panther, the bear, the wolf, the hyena, possibly the lion.” The implied thought is partly that their presence added to the terrors of the temptation, partly that in his being protected from them there was the fulfilment of the promise in the very psalm which furnished the tempter with his chief weapon, that the true child of God should trample underfoot “the lion and the adder,” the “young lion and the dragon” (Ps. xci. 13). De Wette considers this to be “a mere pictorial embellishment.” Lange holds that Christ’s attitude “is a sovereign and peaceful one towards the beasts: they dare not hurt the Lord of creation, nor do they flee before him. Jesus takes away the curse also from the irrational creation (Rom. viii.).” As to the angels, we are not to regard them as assisting him in his conflict with Satan, but succouring him in his exhaustion after it. He holds his court, as it were, on the very battle-field. In token of his victory, heaven pours itself forth in its fairest and best on the spot that but a little before was the ante-chamber of hell.—M.

VERS. 16—20.—*The call of the disciples; or, work and higher work.* I. THE ORDINARY WORK OF MEN AND THE EXTRAORDINARY ARE (HERE) PUT IN THE SAME LINE. It is no small presumption in favour of Christ’s divinity that he chose common men—workmen—for his intimate disciples. What link could there be between the transcendent task of the apostleship and that mean calling in which they were engaged? He alone saw a connection, and not a merely fanciful one. He indicated it and proceeded upon it. The idea was familiar to the prophets (e.g. Jer. xvi. 16), and to Greek literature (as in the ‘Dialogues of Lucian,’ etc.), but not in the same application. The resemblance he suggested is broad and deep. *It was while they were working* that he called them. What a practical, spiritual gain for all toilers is this revelation!

II. THEY ARE SHARPLY DISTINGUISHED AND ABSOLUTELY SEPARATED. As connected by analogy, it is implied that they are separated in fact. Not by confounding the sacred with the secular calling is either benefited. That they are not the same is shown by: 1. *A difference of object.* “For men.” The means must therefore be different, and the entire method. Luke uses a word meaning “to catch alive.” The fishers of men were not to snare them, but to win them to something worthy of them; and not for selfish ends, but through love and Divine good will. So interpreted, how grand is this vocation! 2. *A distinct call.* Christ asks—bids them “come after” him. Were there any previous inner witnessings which this endorsed and strengthened? This call was no simply picturesque or accidental occurrence; it was an essential condition of their assumption of apostolic service. The difference between their new duties and their old ones was so profound that only a distinct inward voice could warrant the transition from the one to the other. Christ spoke to the heart as well as to the ear, and his word was a determining one. 3. *Altered circumstances.* He would take them away for a time from the associations of the fish-net. They would have to cease looking at life as “making a living.” As God’s workmen, they would be his dependents. They would have to live by faith, that they might walk by faith. 4. *Special preparation.* “I will make.” What they had done or learned would not qualify them for what they were to do. He alone could teach them the new craft; and only as they drank in his spirit could they hope to succeed in it.

III. TO PASS FROM THE ONE TO THE OTHER IS ONLY POSSIBLE THROUGH OBEDIENCE, SELF-SACRIFICE, AND CLOSER FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST. Even as he calls them their preparation and discipline commence. It was a sharp trial, but salutary and wise. 1. *Obedience.* They were to go at once if at all, without question, and finally. 2.

Self-sacrifice. This was begun by "leaving all and following" Christ, as Peter phrased it. The will of the flesh, "the will to live," the whole self-life,—had to be renounced. 3. *But their life would be a fellowship with the Master.* This would compensate for every toil and trial. But it would also necessitate continual exercise of sympathy, spiritual insight, and resolute fidelity.—M.

Vers. 21-23.—The authority of Jesus. A note of Christ's work as a whole, which occasioned remark amongst his contemporaries. Not so much what he did, as how. A grandeur of nature and manner. Nothing is so difficult to define as authority, especially when it is a personal attribute.

I. How IT SHOWED ITSELF. 1. *From the outset of his career.* The Capernaum synagogue, where his boyhood had been passed, did not daunt him. The ordinary circumstances, which tend to dwarf even great men, did not detract from his greatness. 2. *It showed itself especially in two directions, viz. teaching and spiritual healing.* (1) Teaching. "He taught—spake—as one having authority." An indefinable yet absolute difference existed in this respect between him and the customary teachers of the people. They went back upon prescription and tradition, the sentences of the rabbis, the legal interpretations received in the schools. They would refer back to some great name, or some generally acknowledged opinion, as a lawyer collects his instances; but their own opinion was seldom or never forthcoming; if it was, it was tentative, unoriginal, and uninfluential. Now, Christ had quite a different tone. He referred to the sentences of the Jewish schools only to condemn them, and he did not hesitate to range himself alone against all the weight of tradition. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, . . . but I say unto you;" "Verily, verily, I say unto you;" "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (2) Action. Look at this special case, the man with the unclean spirit. He shows mastery from the very first. His word is a command, and there is no flinching or compromise. Nor is the order despised; he said, and it was done. 3. *It gave a character to his entire work.* "What is this? a new teaching! with authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey him;" or, "A new teaching with authority (or power)! He commandeth," etc. In the whole round of duties, and undertakings connected with his mission, it is observable, and its effect is to draw attention and to impress.

II. TO WHAT IT WAS DUE. This was the problem which presented itself, which was meant to present itself, to the men of his day. That it was no accident of manner or any mere assumption of superiority is shown by its results. And the general bearing of Christ was meekness itself. It was due to nature rather than office, to personal relation with God. 1. *To absolute spiritual insight.* He saw and knew what he was speaking about in its ground and essence. It was therefore unnecessary for him to sit at any man's feet, or to borrow wisdom of any teacher. 2. *To absolute trust in moral power.* This arose from his identifying himself with it. He did not only speak about truth; he was "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." "I and my Father are one." The display of superior physical strength did not appall him, nor was he discouraged by suffering or death.

III. WHAT IT ARGUED. 1. *His divinity.* This "unknown quantity" in Christ was as unmistakable as it was immeasurable. Out of the depth and fulness of his own spiritual life he must have spoken. The Divine element is therefore an inevitable inference. "Never man spake like this man." 2. *His power to save.* "Even the unclean spirits" obeyed him. It is the moral or subjective side of temptation on which the real weakness of man exists; and just there Christ is omnipotent. He can cure the sick soul and restore moral tone and energy. And his words are an unerring guidance and discipline for the soul: "Lord, to whom can we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."—M.

Vers. 40-45.—The leper's petition. I. THE GENERAL WORK OF CHRIST, WHEN IT IS KNOWN, ENCOURAGES THE MOST FORLORN AND DESPERATE. (Cf. ver. 39.) The nature of leprosy and the law concerning it.

II. SINCERE FAITH, EVEN WHEN IMPERFECT, EVER MEETS WITH THE SYMPATHY AND HELP OF CHRIST. "If thou wilt, thou canst." He believed in his power, but was

ST. MARK.

uncertain as to his willingness. The spirit of the Saviour was therefore concealed from him. Yet Christ answered his prayer. (There is no evidence that the leper identified the will with the power.)

III. CHRIST'S METHOD OF RESTORATION IS ADAPTED TO THE SPECIAL MORAL CONDITION OF THE SUBJECT OF HIS MERCY. It was his sympathy and willingness that had to be demonstrated to the poor leper. This is done by the *assurance*, "I will;" and the *touch* (braving ceremonial defilement and physical repugnance). So, in saving men from their sins, their defects of character and experience are met by special revelations and mercies. A complete and perfect faith in Christ is the evidence and guarantee of perfect salvation.

IV. SPECIAL EXPERIENCES OF DIVINE GRACE DO NOT FREE FROM LESSER DUTIES, BUT RATHER INCREASE THEIR OBLIGATION. The Law was to be honoured. Civil and religious obligations were enjoined. There was a public use in the rules that were imposed, and it was well they should be observed.

V. MERCY MAY BE RECEIVED WITHOUT ITS OBLIGATIONS BEING FULLY REALIZED OR OBSERVED. The leper was cured, but not perfectly. He had not learned the obedience of faith. His inattention to Christ's request created a serious inconvenience and hindrance in prosecuting the work of salvation amongst others. Those who have received benefits from Christ should attend implicitly to all that he enjoins. "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" (John xv. 14). The spiritual blessings of Christ are dependent on perfect subjection to his will.—M.

Ver. 24.—*Christ and the demons*. I. THE FEELINGS THE QUESTION BETRAYED. 1. *A sense of inevitable relation*. His presence at once discovers them; there is no escape when he is near. Their true character is more strongly and unmistakably manifested, as darkness is revealed by light. A positive sense of relation to his person and work is called forth. How far may this have been a witness within themselves personally—in their own individual consciousness? how far a merely constitutional instinct? how far due to connection with the personality of the possessed? That it was beyond their own control is evident. They were unwilling witnesses to his power, and their obedience was not due to loyalty or attachment. So whenever the truth is manifested, it addresses an instinct in intelligent nature which cannot be wholly indifferent to it. 2. *Conscious unlikeness and antagonism*. Being what they were, they could not acquiesce in what he was or did. His presence was judgment and torture to them. They had the keenest perception of his purity and sinlessness, without being attracted by it; on the contrary, their opposition was only the more excited and extreme. The opposition was that of hell and heaven in their essential principles. 3. *Fear and apprehension*. A moral awe and dread attended the consciousness of such holiness, the awe which moral authority inspires. It is akin to what is felt towards God. But there was also "a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." Their empire was not only in jeopardy, it was already doomed. And they must stand or fall together. "Art thou come to destroy us?" How? By dismissing them to Hades. "But even in Hades Christ does not leave their empire to the demons. Thus it was by the destruction of their empire generally. Certainly it was by dismissing them to the Gehenna of torment (according to which the expression in Matt. [viii. 29], the Hades of torment, is to be explained)" (Meyer). In this the sinner is one with the demon.

II. THE ANSWER IT IMPLIED. The possessed one who asked the question knew it had but one answer. Christ had nothing whatever to do with the demons, and they had nothing whatever to do with him. *They had nothing to do with him*: 1. *As agents and representatives of evil*. At a later date he could say, "The prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me" (John xiv. 30). None had ever convinced him of evil. So from the mouth of the demons themselves was the great calumny, afterwards so diligently promulgated, "He hath Beelzebub, and, By the prince of the devils casteth he out the devils" (ch. iii. 22), answered by anticipation. There is no key that will unlock the mystery of his devoted life save that of simplicity of purpose and infinite love. 2. *As moral beings*. There was the clearest knowledge of his character and dignity. "The demons who were in those possessed seem to have perceived sooner than the rest who Jesus was (yea, sooner even than most of the men with whom he walked at that time)" (Bengel). "The Holy One of God" (cf. Ps. xvi.)

was Christ's "concealed designation," a Messianic identification which implied spiritual insight or knowledge (John vi. 69; x. 36; Rev. iii. 7). *Knowledge without love, How fruitless!* They knew him as the Holy One of God, but not as their Saviour. Belief and obedience, but no salvation! So near, yet so far! How was this? (1) Because there was no inward loving acceptance of him as their moral Ruler. (2) This was probably due to the utter corruption of their moral nature. They had become wholly evil, even whilst they perceived the uselessness and misery of sin. They knew the good, but had lost the power to will it. *Even to this may any moral being come who continues in sin, or rather continues out of Christ.* There is no tenderness in Christ's tone to the demons, only rebuke. A day is coming when the blasphemer, the hypocrite, the liar too, will be silenced. It is from such a fate that Christ would save us whilst yet it might be said of us, "And this is *life eternal*, that they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John xvii. 3).—M.

Ver. 28.—"*The region . . . round about.*" I. THE POSITION OF THE CHURCH. 1. *Centre of the world's life.* (1) This by virtue of what she is, the principles of righteousness which she inculcates and practises. These "doctrines of the cross" are keys to the chambers of power and authority. They are the true solution of the mysteries of human life. Questions of biography or of history, of individual lives or of eras, can only be understood from their underlying and determining spiritual principles—the relations of man to the Divine. Because of this connection of righteousness with the laws of the universe, Christian faith and virtue are the conditions of true possession and influence, whether in the region of the material or that of the spiritual. The beatitudes illustrate this truth. Only to the central principle does the world yield up its wealth. Herein, too, lies the reason of the Church's responsibility and stewardship. She holds what she has, not for herself alone, but for others. Her power is a moral one, as being guardian of the best interests of man. (2) This by virtue of her relation to Christ. He is the Centre of humanity, and in him all things are created and sustained. It is, however, only through doctrines and belief that vital connection with him is maintained. Being, so to speak, "in Christ," she is his representative in proportion to her faithfulness and vitality. It is as constituted of individual members, each believing in Christ and living in him, that this character belongs to her, and not from any mystic corporate prerogative. What is true, therefore, of the Church, is so because, in the first instance, it is true of individual believers. Christ himself is the great attractive force of the Church; "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." (3) This by virtue of her present circumstances. Although not of the world, she is in it, sent into it, and kept there. The great reason of her institution is that she may influence—evangelize—her neighbourhood. For a season in the midst of the world, as Christ was in its midst, she is to radiate forth light and life upon mankind. The minister, "of the whole city centre," is typical of the spiritual temple in the midst of world-life. 2. *A moving centre.* Wherever our Saviour went he carried on his work in "the region round about," and "they came to him from every quarter" (ver. 45). In the same manner must it be with his followers. Like him, they must go about continually doing good. Christian work is not exclusively associated with a special place or building, a sacred day or an official service; it is inseparable from the individual personality of the believer, and must constantly proceed wherever he is. 3. *A multiplying centre.* The powers of the individual believer increase and multiply. His command of new truths, and attainment of fresh spiritual life, add to his facilities and capacities for usefulness. And every person added to the faith is a new evangelist, with a sphere and fitness of his own. It is the glory of Christianity thus to propagate itself. The "Society of Jesus" was described as "a sword, with the handle at Rome and the point everywhere." The ideal this represents is only realized in the spiritual society of Jesus—the Church saved through his blood, and in all her members, loyal and loving, carrying out the great commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (ch. xvi. 15).

II. THE FIELD OF THE CHURCH. 1. *Always at hand.* The sphere of the Christian is described from himself as a centre. He can never escape it or be destitute of it. He ought to be always ready and furnished for his work, however poor or ignorant he may

be; for "our sufficiency is of God." "Of whom are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Even the *one* talent is given for use and service. Men often lose themselves in vague dreams and extensive ideas. For this reason it may be, as Bishop Butler suggests, that we are first told to "love our neighbour"—a duty which develops into many graces. It is a bad sign when the immediate neighbourhood, the family, the servants, the friends, etc., of a professing Christian, are neglected. 2. *Practically infinite*. It is undefined save at its centre. Each region is a centre to others. The pressure of spiritual responsibility is as constant and necessary to the Christian's soul as that of the atmosphere in relation to his body. The ever-increasing and widening vistas of possible usefulness are occasions of inspiration and ennoblement to the earnest worker. 3. *Constantly varied*. New subjects of Christian solicitude present themselves, new adaptations of spiritual truth and agency. The adaptability, capacity, and sympathy of the Christian ought to be continually developing. And when "the region round about" has received its due labour and attention and prayer, there is ever some "region beyond" whither the hastening feet of the Saviour have already made a way.—M.

Ver. 35.—*The history of a prayer of Christ*. I. ITS IMMEDIATE OCCASION. 1. *To be found in connection with his work*. It was incessant. Fresh claims upon his attention and compassion were continually being made. Only the day before "all the city" had been "gathered together at the door." The exercise of his healing power was a drain upon his emotional and spiritual nature, and the fatigue of the work, which lasted from morning to night, must have been a severe tax upon the delicate organization of the Saviour. He needed rest. 2. *To be found in the excitement attaching to it*. He was at the beginning of his ministry, and it was full of novelty and uncertainty. As the supernatural power of Christ displayed itself, the people began to broach ideas of a temporal sovereignty. A profound impression was produced upon the public mind, and vast crowds attended him wherever he moved. The corruption and depravity of the human mind, too, must have become increasingly manifest to him. The problem of salvation never could have seemed more distressing or difficult. And, in the midst of his occupation, the contrary currents of worldly thought and human ambition must have been felt by him.

II. ITS ULTIMATE REASON. The circumstances of fatigue and excitement in themselves would not account for the anxiety displayed by Christ to secure opportunity for devotion; it is as associated with his unique personality and aim that they acquire significance. For it is only as arising from personal longing and necessity, that such a departure from the scene of his labours can be understood. We are not to suppose that it was done for an example; the whole proceeding would thereby be rendered too artificial and self-conscious. And yet the action itself was exemplary in the highest degree. Its value as a pattern for our imitation consists in its very absence of self-consciousness. We cannot help asking, "What was the place held by prayer in his spiritual life?" "How was the practice of devotion related to the inward needs of his nature?" It was not simply a reaction of overwrought feeling or an instinctive craving for emotional relief and variation. By his entire spiritual constitution he was intimately related to the Father. The filial bond was infinitely strong, tender, and intense. His true life was twofold—a giving forth of himself to man, and receiving from God; the latter was necessary to the efficiency of the former. He said, "I can of mine own self do nothing," and therefore he ever sought communion with his unseen Father: 1. *For restoration of spiritual power*. 2. *To maintain the elevation of his feeling and purpose*. 3. *For comfort and encouragement*.

III. How IT WAS PREPARED FOR. There is a climax in the text; an impression is thereby conveyed of inward trouble, leading to painstaking effort, which results in final relief and comfort. 1. *He sought the Father early*. "Very early, in the midst of the night," is the literal force of the words. His first impulse toward heavenly communion was obeyed. The thoughts which had kept the night wakeful were not corrupted by the new associations of another day. Are the first impressions of our minds on awakening Divine or human? of heaven or of earth? Do we earnestly seek to know first of all God's will, and strive to realize his presence? He who so prepares for the work and

intercourse of the day will not be overtaken or surprised by evil. Better lose a little sleep than the restful communion of the Father. 2. *His departure was secret.* There was no consulting with flesh and blood. There are inward promptings and voices concerning which no earthly advice should be asked. It is possible that "Simon and they that were with him" were not a little disconcerted and annoyed that they had to seek for him; but even their presence would have been a hindrance. The solemn yet fascinating individualism of true prayer is not realized as it might be. *Secret prayer* is the background of earnest and real *common prayer*. In this matter we have not only the example but the injunction of Christ (Matt. vi. 6). 3. *Not only the actual presence of men but human associations were avoided.* "He departed into a desert place." Such a situation, as formerly the weird solitudes of the Quaritanian Desert, harmonized with his spiritual mood. Wide upland spaces, far withdrawn, brought him nearer to the Unseen and Eternal, afforded larger views, spiritual as well as physical, and favoured the ideality and inwardness that are essential to a great spirit.

"The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills,"

were an anodyne to his fretted and troubled heart; in nature he met God. Such a spot could only have been found at a distance, and this is further implied by the circumstance of the others following after him, and their message, "All are seeking thee." Lessons: (1) *Opportunities for secret prayer will be prized and even created by devout minds.* (2) *If the purest and grandest moral Being the world has seen needed such communion with his Father, how much more such as we?* (3) *God must be sought diligently, and before all else, if he is to be sought effectually.* (4) *How difficult of access and realization is the oratory of the soul, where devotion may be free from earthliness, continuous and uninterrupted!*—M.

Vers. 14, 15.—*The ministry of mercy.* Our text reminds us of the significant fact that Jesus began his ministry in Galilee, and not in Jerusalem, as the Jews might have expected of their Messiah. In the city where the sacred temple stood there was far less of the earnestness and simplicity which our Lord sought for than among the rural peasants and fishermen. Hence his work was begun and was largely continued in a district which was poor and despised. This, however, was only in harmony with much that we know of God's methods; for "his ways are not as our ways." As the Creator of all things, he has placed some of the most beautiful products of nature in obscure spots. We find them in secluded dells, or in the depths of the earth and sea, or they are hidden under the curl of a leaf, or buried in a pool among the rocks. Some of the noblest Christians are to be found in quiet spheres of which the world knows nothing; and some of the highest work has been done for our Lord in obscure villages, or in lands out of the range of tours and trades. Besides this, the selection of Galilee as the earliest scene of our Lord's ministry was an indication of its nature. It was a tacit rebuke to the carnal expectations current among the people concerning their Messiah; and, in giving an opportunity to the degraded and despised provincials, it showed that he had come "to seek and save that which was lost." Several significant facts respecting his ministry are suggested by the text, namely—

I. **THIS MINISTRY FOLLOWED UPON A TIME OF TERRIBLE TEMPTATION.** The verse immediately preceding this puts in vivid contrast temptation in solitude and ministry in public. Loneliness of spirit is a fit preparation for publicity of life; and our Lord, who was in all points made like unto his brethren, deigned to share this experience. Joseph was a solitary prisoner before he became a ruling prince. Moses passed from the splendours of Egypt to the quietude of Midian before he became a leader and lawgiver. David was a persecuted exile before he was ready for enthronement. Paul was three years in Arabia before he was the apostle to the Gentiles. Our Lord spoke of such inward preparation for outward work when he said to his disciples, "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops." Public work is only safe when preceded by private prayer. True teaching can only come from those who are first taught of God. Without personal experience of inward struggles and victories, we shall never speak to others with

power or sympathy. But if we would get the benefit of solitude, if we would achieve victory over self and sin in our own hour of temptation, we must be like our Lord, who was baptized before he was tempted, who was filled with the Holy Spirit before he fought with the evil spirit. Then out of such an experience we can speak lovingly and helpfully to others.

II. **THIS MINISTRY SUCCEEDED THE SILENCING OF JOHN.** Our text very pointedly suggests that the public appearance of the Lord occurred immediately after the ending and completion of the Baptist's work. The words are significant: "After that John was cast into prison, Jesus came." God will never let his work fall to the ground. If one noble witness to the truth is removed, another springs up in his place. If persecution silences one voice, another at once takes up the testimony. So when the disciples of John were most helpless and disheartened, and were beginning to scatter, suddenly the Lord of life stepped down into their midst, and rallying them round about himself, proved that he could do far more towards the victory than any fabled Achilles among his Greeks. Therefore let us reflect that when we or our fellow-workers fail or are removed, God can raise up others to accomplish his purpose; and let us cheer ourselves with the thought that when heart and flesh fail he himself will appear amongst us. It was "when John was cast into prison" that "Jesus came."

III. **THIS MINISTRY STRUCK THE KEY-NOTE OF MERCY.** We must remember that our Lord came forth amongst the people as one humanly and divinely great, endued with power beyond all others. Yet by that wonderful self-restraint which always characterized him (Matt. xxvi. 53; John xviii. 36) he brought no immediate retribution on those who were foes both of God and man. Herod, for example, by his imprisonment of John, had done a wrong against conscience and against God, as well as against that faithful servant of the Most High. But Christ raised no revolt against the tyrant, which would have hurled him from the throne he desecrated; nor did he threaten or curse him and his followers. He came preaching "*the gospel*," proclaiming the glad tidings, calling upon all—ay, even Herod himself—to repent and believe, and so receive salvation. This was the key-note of his ministry, and was heard throughout it, even to its last chord; for on the cross he prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

IV. **THIS MINISTRY PROCLAIMED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A KINGDOM.** "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." The long waiting for deliverance was over. God, in the person of his Son, had come to establish a kingdom, in which the Divine love and power and will would be revealed as never before. The forerunner had been making the way straight, and now the King had come and was ready to rule over all who would welcome him. This kingliness of Christ is one of the special characteristics of the revelation given to us through Mark. Matthew presents the Messiah who fulfilled ancient predictions; Luke describes the Son of man in his pitifulness and graciousness; John proclaims the Divine Word, who was in the beginning with God, and who himself was God; but Mark, instructed possibly by Peter, who dwells so much on the kingdom in his Epistles, begins by announcing "the kingdom of God is at hand." Christ shall reign for ever, over all nations and kindreds and tongues; and each one of us is invited to bow to his sceptre and submit ourselves to his gracious rule, that ours may be the bliss of those who shouted "Hosanna!" and not the curse of those who cried "Crucify him!" To enter that kingdom we are called upon to "repent and believe the gospel;" to change our minds and ways, to turn from sin to God, from self to Christ, and to trust and follow him in whom the glad tidings are incarnate.—A. R.

Vers. 16, 17.—*Christ's call to busy men.* Simon and Andrew were just beginning their day's work by casting their net into the sea, and at that critical moment, when, if ever, delay would seem excusable, Christ called them to follow him. But he had already won their hearts, and they were only waiting for such a summons to come, "and straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him." In their daily work these fishermen had acquired devotion, patience, and enterprise, which were now to be consecrated to nobler service, when, as fishers of men, they would gather spoil from the restless, dreary sea of human life. A call coming to men in the midst of their daily business reminds us of the following truths:—

I. THAT HONEST WORK FITS FOR HIGHER DUTIES. Those who are indolent in the world are not of great use in the Church. If men are not fit for ordinary work, they seldom are fit for Christ's service. Our Lord does not call the indolent aesthetes, who would gaze on a lily for hours in a languid rapture, but he summons men with capacity, self-rule, vigour, and tact. God has ever chosen such. If he would have a lawgiver, he calls one who is as diligent among the sheepfolds in Midian as he had been in the schools of Egypt. If he would tell the world of his future kingdom he inspires a statesman like Daniel, who already has upon him the cares of a great empire. If he would speak burning words to his people, he summons to his service the herdsman who drives his cattle home in the gloaming down the hillside of Tekoa. So here, Christ calls Matthew from the receipt of custom, and these four fishers from their boats. In the daily plod, in the monotonous round of life, above the whirr of human traffic, a voice speaks, saying, "Come ye after me."

II. THAT DIGNITY AND BLESSING ARE TO BE FOUND IN DAILY TOIL. Toil, once a curse, has been transformed by Christ Jesus into work which is a source of blessing to the world. In nature we can only regain a wilderness to order and beauty by unremitting toil; and only by long labour do we repossess ourselves of rule. The exquisite flowers in the hothouse are signs of human skill as well as of God's gift. The rich harvest-fields, which whisper of abundance, are nature's response to work. Wherever idleness is supreme, fertile lands become the lairs of wild beasts, and man, who was appointed to regal right, starves amid profusion. Besides, work is good for society, as it was good for those disciples to be thrown together so as to share perils and successes, for thus mutual love and confidence arose. Society is most compact and stable when built upon a foundation of industry—every class recognizing its dependence on another, as stones in the living temple. That home is the happiest, too, in which self-indulgence is a stranger, and where mutual sympathy is felt in the efforts of all.

III. THAT IN ORDINARY OCCUPATIONS WE MAY REALIZE THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST. His sympathy with the busy none can question. He himself spent more time in ordinary work than in public teaching. He gave his presence to his disciples (both before his resurrection and after it) when they were on the lake working for a living. Still he is to be found, not in the dreams of the mystics or in the cell of the hermit, so much as in the heart of him who must be busy with the world's work and yet prays to be free from its spirit. Conscious of his nearness, we shall not do our work carelessly; we shall not lower the standard set before us in his Word; we shall never shrink from rebuking wrong-doing, even when it is customary; and there will be constant joy within our hearts amidst all turmoil, so that we can say, "I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth." Beware of going steadily on with work without any thought of Christ, as if self was your king and the world your home. You may prosper so greatly that others will envy your skill and "good luck;" but the day of reckoning will surely come; the law of retribution will not sleep. Reaping only what you have sown, your largest gain will prove your deepest loss.

IV. THAT CHRIST IS CALLING ALL TO LOFTIER SERVICE. It is necessary to labour for the supply of physical wants, but there are other and higher responsibilities resting upon us as parents, employers, teachers, and friends. With wonderful condescension our Lord describes the nature of his service, by figures drawn from the scenes with which his hearers were most familiar. If people followed him for the sake of the bread which perisheth, he spoke to them of the "Bread of life;" and if a woman was drawing water at the well, he spoke to her of "living water." He led the Magians to him by "a star;" and taught these fishermen by their fishing, telling them that hereafter they should "catch men," not, indeed, for death, but for life. This was a beautiful image for all time. The sea represents the wide world, which seems dark and deep as we stand on the fringe of its mystery, wonderingly. The fish are emblematic of those lost to the sight of some in the higher world, as they wander amid oozy weeds and treacherous rocks. The net pictures the truths and warnings of the gospel, which lay hold on men, and, gathering them together, raise them into a new element, in which they can only live when they have a new life. As "fishers of men," we want patience and hope, for we know little or nothing of the result of the toil as yet. We only know that the net is cast, but the draught is not yet counted upon the shore. It is ours to

"mend" the net, to have it well in hand, to cast it in a likely place, and then to wait and watch and pray. Quote Keble's hymn beginning—

"The livelong night we've toiled in vain;
But at thy gracious word
I will let down the net again:
Do thou thy will, O Lord."

A. R.

Ver. 29.—The home and the synagogue. This passage, which gives an account of a sabbath spent in Capernaum, shows us the manner in which many unmentioned sabbaths were spent by our Lord and his disciples. Whithersoever Jesus went we should follow him, translating into modern habits the principles which underlay his actions. Consider—

I. THE SYNAGOGUE WHICH JESUS ENTERED. Its worship, unlike that of the temple, was not specially ordained by the Mosaic code. It was the outcome of earlier and more habitual devotions, to which the tents of the patriarchs had not been strangers. Side by side with the ornate, national ritual that enshrined the spiritual truths which, as the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us, were fulfilled in the work of Jesus Christ, this more homely worship continued. Its form sometimes varied, yet it constantly ministered to the religious instruction of the people, and expressed their devotional feeling. In such services our Lord from his childhood took part, and his apostles used them for the propagation of Christian truth amongst their fellow-countrymen. As the synagogue represented the abiding religious worship of the people, we will consider what it was to our Lord and his disciples. 1. *It was a place of worship.* It is noteworthy that, so far as we know, Jesus Christ never neglected the ordinary worship in which the people united. If any might have found an excuse for doing so, it certainly was he. Self-sufficient in the fulness of his Divine life, he required no help from such extraneous means. With his spiritual insight he could see the formalism and unreality of many about him, and knew the terrible extent to which false teaching misrepresented the character and the ways of God. But he did not turn from the synagogue with contempt, nor did he make the place a scene of theological strife. He himself, the Sinless One, was present there amongst a sinful people, and he devoutly joined with them in prayer and praise. The remembrance of this should serve as a rebuke to those who, in our day, neglect the sanctuary. Their spirituality may be such that they can meditate profitably in their home or in the fields; their intelligence may be so great that no human teacher can help them; yet they do not surely compare with him who was the wisest Teacher and lived the loftiest life the world has ever known, and yet went into the synagogue every sabbath day, "as his custom was." 2. *It was a place for teaching.* During the service of the synagogue an opportunity was given to any worshipper present to speak a few words on the interpretation of the Scriptures (Acts xiii. 15). Of this liberty the apostles often availed themselves. In this they followed their Lord. It is stated in ver. 21 that Jesus "taught" on this sabbath, and we do not wonder that the people "were astonished at his teaching." He showed the spiritual significance of the events in Old Testament history, which were too often merely subjects of national boasting. He drew his illustrations, not from rabbinical books, but from the lake and the fields, from the housewife's employments and the merchant's trading. And as he spoke the weary found rest, the eager seekers had a revelation of God, the anxious lost their burdens, and a hush came over the assembly as if the peace of heaven was brooding there. 3. *It was a place of comfort.* Help and deliverance came even to the poor demoniac, whose obscene ravings and hideous shrieks disturbed the worship and interrupted the teaching that day. He found that the synagogue was "the house of God and the gate of heaven" to his enslaved spirit. So has many a man, possessed by sin, had deliverance wrought for him where Jesus is. The disciples also knew that comfort was to be found in worship. Hence Simon Peter was there, although he had illness at home such as would detain many a Christian from public worship. What to some would be an excuse was to him a call to the house of God, as the place of rest for anxious hearts. There songs of praise may lift us up as on angels' wings, and Christian teaching may prove as the Bread of life to our hungering hearts.

II. THE HOME WHICH JESUS BLESSED—"the house of Simon and Andrew."

These two brethren appear to have removed from Bethsaida, possibly because of marriage connection with the place or for their convenience as fishermen. 1. *It was a home with ordinary associations.* There was nothing special or distinctive about it or about others which our Lord frequented, and in which he did some of his mightiest deeds and spoke some of his most weighty words. His presence gave sanctity to domestic associations from the time of his first miracle (John ii. 2) to the hour when he made himself known in the home of Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 29). We are not to sever ourselves from them—even Peter did not (ver. 30; 1 Cor. ix. 5)—but should rather seek to recognize and welcome Jesus amidst them. It is a happy thing when there is family peace and love such as seem to have prevailed in this home. A “wife’s mother” would occupy a difficult and delicate position, but such had been her wisdom and gentleness, her sympathy and constancy, that she had now the love of all, and therefore, directly Jesus entered the home, her illness and need of help prompted the urgent and united prayer he so gladly answered. 2. *It was a home in lowly life.* A fisherman’s house—not the stately palace of a Herod. In contrast with our Lord’s humility and graciousness, how paltry seems the ambition of those who would make any sacrifice to get a stately establishment or to push their way into higher social circles! A palace often hides from the world aching hearts and wasted lives, while a cottage may be the home where love and peace are constant, because Jesus is in the midst. 3. *It was a home significant of higher fellowship.* The Christian Church sprang rather from the homes of the people than from the temple at Jerusalem. If it had originated in the temple, sacramentalism would have found more justification than it does in the New Testament. But the temple was not frequented by the great Teacher to the extent we might have expected. His Church met in the homes of Capernaum and Bethany. The relations between his disciples were to be those of brothers and sisters, bound together, not by law, but by love. Let us, then, try to make the Church a home, and thence the voice of our gracious Master will speak with effectual power to a weary world, saying, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”—A. R.

Vers. 32, 33.—*Christ the Healer.* The healing of Peter’s wife’s mother, following on the cure of the demoniac in the synagogue, aroused the whole city of Capernaum. Believing that what this good Physician could do for one he could do for all, crowds of suppliant gathered around our Lord on the evening of the sabbath day. In this incident we see—

I. THE GRACIOUSNESS OF THE SAVIOUR. 1. *His accessibility.* Whether in the synagogue or in the house, whether in the glow of noonday or in the cool of eventide, he was always ready to meet a case of need where there was faith and expectancy. He was not like a popular physician, with whom the patient makes a previous appointment, in whose ante-chamber he waits till exhausted, and whose fee cripples his means. At any time, “without money and without price,” Christ would heal the sick. He is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” Even though the shadows of life’s evening are falling around the sin-sick soul, it is not too late to offer the prayer, “Jesus, Master, have mercy upon me!” 2. *His consideration.* His varied methods of cure showed his readiness to meet the special circumstances of each. Thus, he took Peter’s wife’s mother “by the hand,” perhaps because she was delirious and could not understand his words, or because she was weak and needed the confidence which that expectant hand-grasp would give. Similarly, he touched the eyes of the blind, and his disciples took the cripple by the hand (Acts iii. 7). Christ still adapts himself to men’s peculiar necessities. To some a word of promise inspires hope, in others a word of warning awakens thought. A sermon may arouse to penitence, a mother’s love may win to Christ, a grief may make serious, or a joy may bring a man on his knees in thankfulness. Happy is it when, in all of these or in any of these, Christ appears to the soul. 3. *His sympathy.* This was of the essence of his work. Matthew here appropriately applies to him the words of the prophet, “Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses;” by which we understand that there was nothing perfunctory or mechanical in his healing work. He *felt* every case, and came in living contact with the soul he cured. His touch was not merely physical, it was an *outgoing of soul*. Hence he “sighed” when he cured the blind; he “felt virtue” going out of the hem of his garment; he “wept” and “groaned” at the grave of Lazarus:

and all this was not because the effort was great, but because the effort was needed. In harmony with this we read in ver. 41 that, when the leper came, Jesus being "moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him." He did this although he knew that it involved him in ceremonial defilement; but he was willing to make the leper clean, even by contracting uncleanness himself. In that we have a sign of what St. Paul meant when he said, "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

II. THE EAGERNESS OF THE SUPPLIANTS. She who was ill of fever in Peter's house could not plead for herself, and therefore others interceded for her, and not in vain. Encouraged by this, parents brought their children, sons their mothers, and "they brought unto him all that were diseased." 1. *Some were physically diseased.* Laid aside from activity, a burden instead of a support to others, suffering pain which made days and nights wearisome, invalids would be thankful to those who bore them in their strong arms to Jesus' feet. We may do the like for our sufferers, and if restoration to health is not given, serenity of heart will be. The voice of Christ will be heard amidst the storm of their trouble, saying, "It is I; be not afraid." Blessed by his presence, if they recover they will go back to the world as those who have been on the borders of heaven, or if they enter the dark valley, he will fulfil the promise, "I will come again, and receive you to myself." 2. *Some had spiritual disorders.* It was sin which lay at the root of all suffering. Christ came to put it away by the sacrifice of himself. By his removal of the effects he gave a sign of the removal of the cause. If we have those dear to us who are tied and bound by the chain of their sins, let us bring them to Jesus, earnestly, tenderly, patiently, hopefully. Those who through drink seem demon-possessed, those feverish with anxiety, those so morally stained that men of good repute avoid them as though they were leprous,—may all find hope and help in Christ. 3. *Some felt their own need of blessing.* They did not wait for others to bring them. The leper, for example, of his own accord came kneeling to Jesus, feeling that he could make him clean. The Law could only separate the leper from others and pronounce him clean after restoration; but Christ had purifying power, such as the Law never had. Similarly now, outward restrictions may check wrong-doing; the moral influence of friends may restrain us, and vows and resolves may prove of service; but the heart is only turned from sin when God answers the prayer, "Create within me a clean heart." It is just short of that acknowledgment and cry that many halt, though others have done for them all that they can; and Jesus waits for faith and prayer that he may say, "I will; be thou clean."—A. R.

VERs. 1—8.—*Glad tidings.* I. THEY ARE THE FULFILMENT OF LONG HOPES. Human nature is ideal; it is a creature of wishes and of hopes, and made for enjoyment. The love of the living God is at the root of all our instincts. Faith is our expression of the sense of this. It begets hope amidst suffering and sorrow, sustains the soul in patience. God seeking man, man in turn seeking God,—this is the secret life of Scripture and of history. History is sacred because it is the reflection of the vast spiritual struggle of man to apprehend God, of God to apprehend his creature. "I will not let thee go except thou bless me!" is the cry of man. "I am found of them that seek me!" is the answer of God.

II. HOPE DIES DOWN IN SIN AND MISERY, AND CAN ONLY BE REMOVED IN REPENTANCE. Pessimism and despondence spring from unfaithfulness. Men are not living the life which begets hope. Palestine was depressed, conquered and unhappy. John proposes no political change, but a moral change. Man can endure outward ills, and seek for their removal, if the hearts are only happy. The inward emancipation, the "remission of sins," is what we all need. No other "franchise" will really do much for us without this. In order to have the kingdom of God, there must be an energy in the soul to grasp it. The nerveless hand cannot raise the food to the lips. "In order to possess God, we must have something that is capable of possessing God." The possibility of repentance is itself glad tidings, virtually including all others.

III. SERIOUSNESS AND SOLEMNITY THE PROPER MOOD OF EXPECTATION. 1. This typified in the ascetic character of the Baptist. Thought and self-denial, prayer and fasting, low living and lofty aspiration,—this is the ground from which the fairest flowers of joy spring. Not upon any soil barren of thought are they found. 2. In the

rite of baptism. It expressed the new will of the people—decision, renunciation of the old, the putting on of the white dress of purity in preparation for the Bridegroom. The confession of sin and the mercy of God are coincident. 3. In the attitude of reverent waiting. A mighty One is at hand. The mission of the Baptist was in itself incomplete. The symbolism of his apparel and way of life had a significance behind it. So had the outward baptism of water. To this mood the gospel would ever bring us. Revelation is inexhaustible. The secrets of history in the nation and the individual have not been all told. Every day is a new day, every morrow will bring its gladness to the soul that believes.—J

Vers. 9—13.—*The consecration of Jesus.* I. THE GOOD OF CUSTOM. Honoured by his submission to baptism. This is an example. Custom is the sacred link between past and present. Old customs, sacred rites, should be kept up; only abandoned when they no longer teach truth, but more falsehood than truth. Rebellion against custom for rebellion's sake is vicious individualism. Compliance with the beauty of order is the mark of a loyal and loving spirit.

II. THE SYMBOL IS PRECIOUS, NOT FOR ITS FORM, BUT ITS CONTENTS. We speak of a "beautiful word," but it is the thought conveyed by it that shines. So of a "sacred rite;" but the one sacred thing is the spiritual belief signified, the real union of the soul with God. Upon the meek spirit the gentleness of Heaven descends. The "meekness and gentleness" of Christ is the grace of the lowly and obedient heart. The delight of God is in those human traits which resemble and reflect Jesus.

III. TRIAL FOLLOWS CONSECRATION. The Spirit of God is given to prepare for service; and the call to this is not long delayed. All trial is for good. There is no needless torment of the spirit in God's school. Only in conflict do we really learn reality.

"When the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet. Both try.
He's left himself in the middle; the soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!
Never leave growing till the life to come!"

Solitude is a necessary element in trial. (See Robertson's sermon on the 'Loneliness of Christ.') Life is a drama on which angels and demons look with intensest interest. Evil is ever near; succour never far off.—J.

Vers. 16—20.—*Call of disciples.* I. CALLING MEANS SEPARATION. We cannot prove any calling without separation. The merchant must separate himself from the easy-chair and the book, the student from society, the soldier from home. One main object is enough for most men. Few can properly pursue the ministry and business at the same time.

II. THE CALLING IMPLIES A CALLER. Not our fancy, whim, passion, but Divine will. To some that will is made known clearly and directly; they cannot mistake. To some not so directly. But need any mistake, if they make it a rule to be ever fulfilling the duty of the moment? It is a mistake to think too much on the point. True thought is God realizing himself in us. True action is God willing to do in and through us. Never resist a pure impulse; never turn from a voice that speaks to what is disinterested in you.

III. TO TAKE TO A HIGHER WAY OF LIFE ALWAYS MEANS THE GIVING UP OF A LOWER. God confounds our avarice by his generosity. We cling to all we can hold; want to keep incompatible things—to be learned but not poor; to have as much of the world as possible, yet not be worldly; to live in self-indulgence, yet earn the reputation of saints. But God teaches us that our surrenders are no less profitable than our seeming gains. The provincial fisher becomes the apostle to the world. The things that are unseen are more than all that are seen.—J.

Vers. 21—28.—*Soul-emancipation.* I. BONDAGE OF BODY AND SOUL OUR NATURAL CONDITION. We are fettered and distressed in our fetters. Disease is a bond; habitual

ideas of one kind or another are bonds to every man. The mystery of evil possession we cannot fathom; what we *know* is that our imagination is a tyrant. "Fixed ideas" harshly govern us, irritate our passions. We long for freedom, yet cannot shake them off.

II. THIS RESTRAINT MUST BE PUT AN END TO BY DIVINE POWER. A tyrannous idea of sin or sorrow will only yield to a larger and stronger idea—to a new fact. A bad temper only to be driven out by the "expulsive force of a new affection." All conversion means this. The darkness is the absence of light, and the tyranny of dark beings is the absence of light in the soul. When we see and believe that the living God means our freedom by the truth, the fetters of the mind fall away. What was real in one way in connection with the local personal activity of Jesus, is universally true of the activity of God in the soul. Truth is one in all its forms: the truths of science, of morals, of art, of health. Reverently let us recognize all as works of God Incarnate, having authority over unclean spirits.—J.

Vers. 29—34.—*The progress of health.* I. IT IS IDENTICAL WITH THE PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY. For Christianity is the embodiment of the wisdom of the physician, the power of the Creator, the compassion of the God. These wonders are really revelations of law. Were the will of God the only factor in the case, we could hardly imagine how suffering could be. But there is our will also. The truth, so far as we may conjecture, seems to be that in the nature of things evil *cannot* be as a rule overcome without the co-operation of the individual free-will. On the other hand, without the operation of the living love of God, any removal of ill seems inconceivable.

II. CHRISTIANITY WILL NOT ADMIT ANY QUESTIONABLE AID IN THIS WORK. No recognition of evil powers, of compliments or testimonials from them. Christian work is vitiated when it courts bad alliances. Better to go on single-handed than in fellowship with those whose aims are not ours. One voice out of time spoils the chorus. One detected interest paralyzes the nerve of benevolent enterprise. Suffer not the demon of policy to speak in our councils.—J.

Vers. 40—45.—*The leper.* I. FOR THE WORST EVILS THERE IS A REMEDY. If not always in the physical, yet ever in the spiritual sphere. They are cured in effect when they are balanced by some weight of good in the soul.

II. IT IS HALF-WAY TO THE REMEDY TO KNOW WHERE IT LIES. The leper knew, and was not ashamed to seek it at the right quarter. Many know who or what will do them good, but are too proud to ask or ashamed to own their need.

III. CHRIST IS THE ALL-HELPFUL ONE. This is ever the representation of him. He wills, God wills, our recovery and our health. Do we then will it? It is an essential condition that we should.

IV. TRUE BENEVOLENCE AND TRUE GRATITUDE ARE UNOSTENTATIOUS. Christ is the example of the former; it is questionable whether the leper is the true type of the latter. He will not obey the word of his Deliverer. He cannot suppress the desire to talk. To prate about others' goodness may really spring from egotistic motives. It is pleasant to be the hero of a tale. Though the leper's conduct is not to be seriously blamed, it illustrates a certain frivolity of mind. And the lesson is taught that "still waters run deep," and thankfulness is best cultivated in silence.—J.

Vers. 1—8.—*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.* "The gospel" is a revelation of the Divine love; the "beginning" of it is therefore hidden in the depths of the eternal love of God. The whole gospel was buried, the end from the beginning, in the Divine purpose; and it was contained seminally in the first promise. Every Divine promise is equal to the event. But the manifestation of the gospel in time, or the historic "beginning of the gospel," is the theme of this prologue. Thought of within the limits of history, the "beginning" is a preparation. The messenger is sent to "prepare the way of the Lord." This preparation is twofold—historic and personal.

I. THE HISTORICAL PREPARATION IS A PREPARATION FOR THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE GOSPEL. The historic preparation must be traced from the moment when the first gentle word of promise mingled, half unheard, with the first words of judgment and condemnation, forwards to that moment in which "the time" was "fulfilled," and the word was heard, "The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

The true disciple, always a listener and a learner, whose eyes are not holden, and who is not "slow of heart to believe," will gladly learn that "from Moses and from all the prophets, the things concerning" his Lord may be "interpreted;" and he will search "in all the Scriptures" for the hidden or open references to him. The preparation by the prophets was not the mere utterance of the word, "Make ye ready the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Their denunciations of sin, their preaching of righteousness, their promises of forgiveness to a repentant Israel, their assurances of a restored prosperity rising into the delineation of a kingdom of holiness and peace, were elements of preparation. And the unique history of the holy nation, "beginning at Moses," and the concurrent histories of surrounding kingdoms, were parts of the same great preparation. And even before Moses, Abraham, through all the gloomy mist and the confusion of wild times, saw a day of peace and gladness and health, and, with largeness of heart and noble unselfishness, "rejoiced to see it," though he knew his sun would long have set ere that bright day arose. Yea, "he saw it and was glad," and by his testimony against idolatry, by his avowal of the one true and living God, and by his sacrifice and obedience, he helped to "prepare the way," as did every seer and believer and righteous man, each in his measure, as far back as Abel. Thus "all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John," in whom the historic preparation was completed. He, than whom there had not "arisen a greater," cried, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." So we humbly trace the Divine preparation by means of prophets and seers and righteous men, and also by a Divine overruling of the works of the wicked. The voice of the herald being ever sounded, if not ever heard, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." But the gospel, which came to men by a prepared way, must be received by men in a prepared spirit.

II. THE PERSONAL PREPARATION IS A PREPARATION FOR THE RECEPTION OF THE GOSPEL. The external, historical preparation terminated in a word, a cry, a gracious preaching, "the voice of one" to whom "the Word of God came." Amid the dreary waste of the wilderness, where the signs of natural convulsion typified the needed moral upheaving, this man, rugged in speech as in dress, of few but earnest words, his tongue a burning flame, his fingers wetted for baptizing with the cooling waters of the brook, lifted up his voice and cried aloud his one message. It was a clear and definite cry, contained in the one word, "Repent." This was his one great demand of the ungodly around him. It is the one word now to be uttered in the hearing of all who have not entered the heavenly kingdom. It is the word which follows the awakening judgment, and precedes the comforting gospel. 1. Repentance, a change of mind leading to a change of life, follows upon reflection, and the deep Spirit-wrought conviction of the sinfulness and wrong of the past. St. Paul describes it as "toward God." No two words could better describe it. If the heart, the thoughts, the steps, have been toward evil, in repentance they turn "toward God." 2. Repentance is declared by confession of sins, a voluntary acknowledgment that the deeds of the past life have been evil. Of that past it is an open repudiation; it is a self-condemnation. 3. Repentance is attested by the beginning of a new life, by "the fruit worthy of repentance." 4. Repentance is sealed in baptism. This is a profession, a promise and pledge, of entering upon a new path. It is also the authorized seal and surety or earnest of the blessing the repentant one seeks. It is not that blessing, but it is the pledge and seal of it. Baptism is "unto repentance;" repentance is "unto remission of sins." When baptism is the true sign of the one, it is the certain pledge of the other; but it is not to be confounded with either, nor with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which a mightier One will impart. Baptism does not bestow remission of sins or the baptism of fire, but it pledges the bestowment of both. So does John "prepare the way" for his Lord. (1) Let every one who is living in sin hear the authoritative cry, "Repent ye;" and know that if the fire of the Spirit burn not up repented sins as chaff, it will burn into the conscience with its unquenchable flame. (2) And let every truly repentant one know that the outer sign is the indubitable pledge of admission into "the kingdom of God," and of participation in all the blessings of that kingdom. It is the seal of the Christian covenant. Then in him the gospel has had its true beginning. (3) The next duty for the repentant one, for which he by repentance is truly prepared, is to "believe the gospel," when he shall be baptized "with the Holy Ghost." But for this John must give place to Jesus, for whom he prepares the way in the hearts of his people. The preparation

then, without and within, is complete. This is the true "beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ." It is begun historically; it is begun personally.—G.

Vers. 9—13.—*The official preparation.* "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ" embraces yet another element. The preparation of "the way" of the Lord is followed by the preparation of the Lord himself. This we must name—*The preparation of the Messiah, the Christ.*

I. The first step in this preparation is **THE ASSUMPTION OF THE HUMAN NATURE.** "The Word became flesh." "It behoved him," who "took hold of the seed of Abraham," with a view to raise it up, "to be made like unto" them whom he would call "his brethren." And "since they are sharers of flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same." Never will the world exhaust the mystery of the Incarnation. No event in human history can equal the grandeur or significance of this. "He was made man" is a greater truth than "he suffered and was buried." It was an infinitely greater condescension to become man than to pass through the lowly shades of human history. The humble home, the toilsome endurance, the poverty, the suffering,—all fall below "Jesus was born in Bethlehem." This event is the most stupendous of all events in the history of the human race.

II. The second step in this preparation is **THE PASSING THROUGH THE LOWLY CONDITIONS OF THE HUMAN LIFE.** The words of the ninth verse turn our thoughts back to silent days of preparation going forward in the house of the carpenter at Nazareth of Galilee, wherein he passed into and passed through and honoured all the stages of human life from infancy to manhood, and where he sanctified the condition of helpless weakness, of ignorance, of submission, of toil, and of honest labour; sanctified the home and the workshop, and the relationships and intercourse of common village life; exalted the lowly lot, and thereby every lot. This was another element of that likeness to "his brethren" which it behoved him to assume. During this period the glory of his person was shrouded. Men had not yet been permitted to behold "the glory as of the only begotten from the Father," in which he was unlike his brethren. Yet he dwelt among men, the Incarnate Word, "full of grace and truth," though not yet "made manifest to Israel." In that tabernacle the true Shechinah was hidden. "He was in the world, and the world knew him not." A few who, with Simeon, "were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem," by prophetic intuition, saw in him the salvation "prepared before the face of all people; a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." In Nazareth "he was subject unto" father and mother, the honoured mother keeping "all the sayings in her heart" that concerned him.

III. A third step in this preparation is **THE SUBMITTING TO ALL THE ORDINANCES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.** Righteousness does not consist in an attendance upon ordinances, but consists not without it. John, who probably knew the character of Jesus better than any saving only Mary, hesitates when he presents himself for baptism; he even "hinders him" with the words, "'I have need to be baptized of thee,' so much better art thou, so much higher; and yet 'comest thou to me?'" He who though "separated from sinners," had daily mingled with them; who had submitted to every ordinance of the Lord for man's sake, "was circumcised the eighth day," was presented in the temple, that they might "do concerning him after the custom of the Law;" who at twelve years of age, and doubtless in succeeding years, "went up after the custom of the feast," would now "fulfil" this "righteousness" also. He passed through all in fellowship with the sinful, and for sinful ones, paying his tribute of dueous attendance on the Divine ordinance, leaving here "an example" that we should do as he had done. As one has said, "He who now comes to this baptism is not a sinner, but a righteous man, who needs neither repentance nor pardon. It is he who for us fulfils all righteousness, who, born of a woman and made under the Law which was given to the unrighteous, has already hitherto observed and performed all the commandments of the Lord to Israel, and for that very reason now subjects himself to that baptism which was ordained of God as the concluding commandment of the old covenant, through which is the transition to the new."¹

IV. The fourth step in this preparation is **THE PUBLIC AND OFFICIAL DESIGNATION OF**

¹ Stier, 'Words of the Lord Jesus,' vol. i. p. 30.

MESSIAH. Yes, truly the transition; for now is the manifestation to Israel to be made, and the open, authoritative designation of him "who from the foundation of the world" had been in Heaven's counsels designated. When so suitable a time as when fulfilling all righteousness? Then, "coming up out of the water, he"—and, as we learn from St. John, the Baptist also—"saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him;" while a voice from heaven proclaims to him, and proclaims through him to all, "Thou art my beloved Son." Now is "Jesus of Nazareth anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power," officially called and set apart. Now the mystery of the Divine Name, in the historical development to the world of the trinity of the God-head, is more fully than ever before disclosed. John, having seen, bears his "witness that this is the Son of God." Presently his works also will bear witness of him, that the Father hath sent him.

V. But meanwhile a yet further step in this preparation is needed. "To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Therefore must he be **TEMPTED OF THE DEVIL**. The devil is man's great adversary, Satan. All evil embodies itself in him. The Redeemer of men must taste—drink—this bitter cup; to a pure nature perhaps of all the bitterest. Full forty days he must needs fast in the wilderness. Oh, the buffetings of those days, of which three examples stand out prominently before us; when, lo! he is so bowed down that angels are sent to "minister to him." Then, "having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the Author of eternal salvation."

From all may be learnt: 1. The perfectness of his human nature, with its experiences, its sympathy, and its example. 2. His perfect Divine nature. 3. His perfect fitness to be the Mediator, the Comforter, the Saviour of the world.—G.

Vers. 14—20.—The fishers of men. An interval of time elapses, the incidents of which, momentous in the great history, are recorded in the other Gospels, e.g. John's testimony to the Lamb of God (John i. 19—34), the gathering of the first disciples (John i. 35—51), the marriage at Cana (John ii. 1—12), the cleansing of the temple (John ii. 13—25), the conversation with Nicodemus (John iii. 1—21). "Now after that John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel." Truly a "beginning" is made. "All things are now ready;" and the Master himself cries aloud with his own voice, "Come." Oh, wondrous grace! The Divine call to the Divine feast! God calling men to himself, to receive mercy, blessing, life! Ever since and to the end will both "the Spirit and the bride say, Come." O Israel, "if thou hadst known in this day, even thou!" Simon and Andrew, James and John, already called to be disciples, but still pursuing, as should every disciple, their daily industry, are now called to be apostles, to forsake home, father, nets, avocations, and gain, to follow the young Rabbi with obedient steps and imitative carefulness, that he may "make" them "to become" (without which making of the Master none can become) "fishers of men." In this incident may be seen: 1. The greatness of this calling. 2. Its imperative demand. 3. An illustrious example of obedience.

I. **THE GREATNESS OF THIS CALLING** is not to be exaggerated. To "catch men"—by no trick, but by the Word of the Lord and by the aid of the Lord, who brings fishes to the nets of toilers on the sea—is to bring them up out of the deep wide sea, the world, into Christ's net, the Church; that they proving good may be gathered into vessels. It is to draw men from evil, to teach them heavenly truth, soul-renewing and saving truth, to guide them into the paths of peace, to encourage and help them in the maintenance of righteousness, to bind in bonds of brotherhood, to incite to holy charity, to build them up in knowledge and doctrine, and so to fit them for useful service on earth and for the felicities of the heavenly life on high. Oh, sacred calling! How immeasurably above all callings! How honourable the work! How honoured the men!—honoured, not by the distinctions that may be gained, but by the work itself. This toil is heavenly, often most heavenly when most hard, most fruitful when most despised and apparently least successful, as was that of the great Master.

II. For all time, and for the instruction of all apostles and servants who must, "for the kingdom of God's sake," forsake all and follow him, this simple incident, told in half a score lines, is ample. **THE IMPERATIVE DEMAND** is heard in the deep conscience.

in the warm, pitiful sympathy of the obedient disciple, ready to lay down life and all for the Master's sake and in his cause; it is a call coming, not from the lips, but from the wretched, sinful lives of the wicked in the world around, or from the wilds of heathen darkness, superstition, and loss afar off; from the Church that is quick to discern the signs of fitness, tender in feeling the claims of the needy, and watchful to behold the favouring conjunction of circumstances. But the call, "Follow me," never comes from the lips of Jesus by way of the attractive position amongst men, of emolument, ease, or honour. If the words are heard thence proceeding, they are simulated. Let him who so hears beware! The true call is imperative. It cannot be relaxed even for the sake of "friends at home." Nay, others must bury the "dead father" rather than the solemn "Follow me" be unheeded.

III. To illustrate this, the quick Obedience here so **ILLUSTRIOUSLY EXEMPLIFIED** is definitely expressed. "They left their nets . . . they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants." For ever *they left* must be the true test of sincere devotion. If men leave a broken net for a whole one, and only to catch fishes, the world which has read this story knows the deceit, and does not acknowledge the Divine call. Generally the Church is pure. The earthly gain is not great; the burden is heavy, Who follow this Master must cleave to his doctrine, and struggle to defend it, and bear the painfulness of maintaining the faith in presence of many difficulties and rude suggestions of doubt, and the severe treatment of men who do not intend to be cruel and wicked, but who severely try the hearts of humble believing servants with "doubtful disputations." But the servant must stand by the Master; ah, and stand by his cause when he is not near; stand by it when it seems to be failing, as well as when it seems likely to prevail. The true fitness to be a "fisher of men" is to "leave all;" for most truly here the Master saith, "Whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be," in the truest and best sense, "a fisher of men." How cheering to these fishers must have been the prophetic testimony of the great ingatherings which rewarded the letting down the net "on the right side of the ship!" Yet how much harder then to leave that net!—G.

Vers. 21—39.—*The illustrative example of Christ's work.* No sooner is the great work begun than a strikingly illustrative example of its true character and beneficent power is presented. It was in Capernaum, which, so far from being "exalted unto heaven," would hear the curse, "Thou shalt go down unto Hades." And it was "the sabbath day;" therefore of a surety "he straightway . . . entered into the synagogue." Now, in his "Father's house," he is doing the great work he came to do, "to bear witness of the truth." Here are all Divine things—the Lord's day, the Lord's house, the Lord's Son, the Lord's Word. Truly "the kingdom of God" is come. It is a typical example. Here we learn that Christ's work is: 1. A work of teaching. 2. A conquest of the evil spirit. 3. A healing of human infirmities and sufferings. This threefold work finds its ample and beautiful illustration here.

I. In the synagogue he TAUGHT. This is his chief, perhaps his greatest, work. His kingdom he will rule with truth; with truth he will wrest its alienated portions from the usurper. This is his one weapon of antagonism against all evils. He himself is "the Truth." His was no second-hand, derived truth. He was a perpetual spring of new truth—an authority in all matters of truth. "Truth is in Jesus," and this his manner would betoken. Well might the hearers stand "astonished." Christ calmly spoke truth—the truth. This was ever his sword. By it the heart is pierced; men are convicted "in respect of sin" by it; the truth brings peace, for it brings the knowledge of salvation; the truth reveals the way of life; the truth unveils the future. All truth he taught. "Out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations." The wise soldiers of the cross to-day preach the Word; the wise servants scatter truth, for it is the only seed from which the kingdom of heaven will grow.

II. Following hard upon the utterance of truth is **CONFLICT WITH THE SPIRIT OF EVIL**, which, being a spirit of error, truth disturbs. Then the great conflict is seen. The "unclean spirit" has nothing in common with Jesus, the pure One, as is declared in "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?" No; these are mutually exclusive, mutually destructive. The spirit of evil is revealed. 1. It is an "unclean"

spirit. 2. It is a spirit of antagonism to truth. 3. It is a malignant spirit, "tearing" its victim till he cries aloud. 4. Till Jesus speaks, it dominates over the entire life of its victim. 5. But in his presence it is a conquered spirit. "With authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." There is no power, in earth or in Hades, above him. Christ's word then, now, and always, casts out the evil spirit.

III. But men suffer many pains and sorrows. Ignorance, folly, mistake, sin,—all combine to expose the tender flesh to injury. It is the holy mission of the Son of man to HEAL HUMAN INFIRMITIES, to dry up the fount of human sorrow, to wipe the tears from human faces. The prostrate mother-in-law of his chief apostle is named to him as he leaves the synagogue, "and he came and took her by the hand, and raised her up; and the fever left her, and she ministered unto them." He has shown his relation to truth as its Fountain, to the evil spirit as its Conqueror, to disease as its Healer. Lo! the need of his presence and work is demonstrated. The cool of the day affords suitable time, and "they bring unto him all that were sick, and those that were possessed with devils." Of them, "he healed many that were sick with divers diseases, and cast out many devils." Oh, gracious visitation! Well might "all the city be gathered together at the door." What a holy excitement! What a day of grace! This but typifies the healing power of his word and doctrine. At once we learn that Christ stands opposed to human suffering. But disease is the natural consequence of broken law. It is the just retribution following disobedience. Is Christ opposed to law? No, he heals disease and casts out devils, as he commanded his disciples to do: 1. By his word and spirit bringing men to obedience to law. 2. By the sick being brought in penitent faith to him, when the moral end of the sickness is truly answered. 3. By ministrations of that charity which Christian teaching awakens and sustains. 4. By his own Divine word of blessing upon the efforts of men to learn and keep the laws of nature, which are his laws. Thus "the gospel of Jesus Christ" begins. For its end we wait. The seed-corn is cast into the earth. The harvest will follow.—G.

Vers. 40—45.—*The cleansing of the leper.* The work and wonders of the previous day created so great an excitement that he early rose, "a great while before day," for calmness and the refreshment of solitude and prayer, and finding "a desert place," he there "prayed." O hallowed ground! Simon and his companions follow, and finding him, say, "All are seeking thee." But he "came forth to preach," therefore he would go "elsewhere," and the marvellous account given is, "He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out devils." In the course of his tour "there cometh to him" one of the many in whose bodily infirmity preachers and teachers have always seen the type of the spiritual sickness; "there cometh to him a leper." He is alone, for the multitude avoid him. Attention must not be diverted from these two—the sufferer and his Saviour.

I. THE SUFFERER AND HIS APPEAL. Leprosy is thus described: "The most terrible of all maladies, a living death, a poisoning of the springs, a corrupting of all the humours, of life; a dissolution little by little of the whole body, so that one limb after another actually decayed and fell away. The Jews called it 'the finger of God.'" They knew no cure for it. His "beseeching" cry is heard as he draws near, and ere he falls, kneeling, where so many afterwards knelt, at the feet of Jesus. He has heard of the fame of the Rabbi, for it has spread afar. With piteous words he cries, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." What an inversion of this is much of the faith of to-day! The goodness of Jesus all acknowledge, but many deny his power to heal. This man knew only what had been reported to him—the power. He had not yet gazed into the tender eyes that beamed upon him. He had not yet heard the calm and gentle voice that breathed the tenderest love of the tenderest of all souls. But he will hear it. He had not felt the pressure of that hand of power; but, strange to say, he on whom no friendly hand has rested for long, will feel its healing touch. It needed not the cry to pierce to the heart of the great Healer; the sight was enough. But the words "thou canst" denote a faith which indicates the needed preparation. But the appealing "If," and "If thou wilt!" Oh, if all depended upon that alone, how many more would be healed! Once it was said "If thou canst;" when the quick reply, "If thou canst," both rebuked the doubt (pardonable under the circumstances) and threw back upon the questioner the sense of weakness. Here is no doubt of the power; but "wilt" thou? So the unclean,

corrupt, slow-dying sufferer appeals to the Lord of life, and love, and power. It is not wrong to say "If thou wilt." It is a lower form of "Thy will be done."

11. The humble cry turns us from the sufferer to THE SAVIOUR, to learn his compassion, to see his touch, to hear his word of power, and to witness its instant effect. 1. Jesus was "moved with compassion." What had not the world to hope from that "compassion"! What may it not still hope from it! We could hope much from compassion such as many good souls would show; but what from his compassion! What depth; what tenderness; what yearning; and what power! Happy he who commits himself to the compassion of Christ. 2. With quickness "he stretched forth his hand, and touched him." There was comfort in that, for all others fled from him. But it was a touch of acceptance and assurance, having many moral lessons. "I do not despise thee." His touch had compassion in it, perhaps more than power, though "power" went forth from him when others touched even his garments. 3. The true power, however, is in the word, "Be thou made clean." It is a command to that body and to disease. The disease, Christ's servant of judgment, obeys: "the leprosy departed from him;" and the body obeys, putting on its new robes of health, the flesh as of a little child—"he was made clean." Can faith desire more? He who would learn to have faith must stand near and see, and let the "works bear witness." Faith is God's gift, like the dew of the morning, as silently, as wondrously given. Again let it be said, if men would have faith they must come to the Word; the air is full of blessing when the word of Christ is vibrating in it; and it will distil as the dew upon the chill, sad heart. How great a miracle! yet typical of "greater works" yet to be done. It is easier to say to the body, "Be thou made clean," than to say it to the soul. But now a command, having within it a touch of sternness, "He strictly charged him, . . . Say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing the things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." Alas! even gratitude could not conquer joy. His new life, his whole flesh, forbade silence, and he "began to publish it much." It was almost excusable, yet not entirely. For Christ's words must be obeyed at all cost. The Lord's ways are best, as is here proved. Disobedience brings its inconvenience. The cities suffered by the man's error. Ah, every city suffers by every man's error. Jesus could not "openly enter;" he must hide "in desert places." But "they came to him from every quarter."

Thus may all afflicted in body or soul learn: 1. To offer their cry to him, who, even if they err in their methods, will not despise their prayer. 2. That Christ willeth to heal all, and is able. 3. That his compassion is never unmoved in presence of human woe. 4. That the humble appeal to him will surely meet with a helpful response. 5. That the best return is to suppress their own inclination, and, even with crushed feelings, obey his minutest word; for so is his purpose best answered.—G.

Vers. 1—8. Parallel passages: Matt. iii. 1—12; Luke iii. 1—18. *The ministry of John the Baptist.* 1. THE BEGINNING OF ST. MARK'S MEMOIR. 1. *The commencement.* It is a remarkable circumstance and a curious coincidence that the first words of this Gospel are an echo of Peter's confession. In that confession, as recorded by St. Matthew, Peter expresses his belief in the very remarkable words, "Thou art *the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" In nearly the same words St. Mark commences his narrative: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." 2. *Difference of construction.* The words of this first verse may be taken (1) as the title of the entire book; or (2) in construction with the following verse, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was as it is written in the prophets;" or (3) even in connection with the fourth verse, the second and third being parenthetical; that is, "The beginning of the gospel . . . was John baptizing." 3. *Omissions.* After a brief but indispensable introduction, touching the ministry of the Baptist, the evangelist hurries on to his concise but clear and comprehensive narrative of our Lord's public life, beginning with his baptism by John. He passes over the four events of the Saviour's childhood—the circumcision and presentation in the temple, which are recorded by St. Luke, as also the visit of the Magi and the flight into Egypt, mentioned by St. Matthew. He passes over the only recorded incident of his early days—the one event which constituted the dividing line between his childhood and youth, when, at his second appearance in the temple, he disputed with the doctors, and in connection

with which we have his first recorded utterances, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" St. Mark also omits the lineage of our Lord, by which St. Matthew connects him with the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, and likewise that other genealogy, which St. Luke traces still higher up, connecting him with Adam and so with humanity itself, including Gentile as well as Jew. In the whole four Gospels there is only one single verse descriptive of our Lord's childhood, which reads as follows:—"The child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom [or rather, 'waxed strong, becoming filled with wisdom'] : and the grace of God was upon him ;" while one other verse contains the record of his youth, "Jesus increased [rather, 'advanced'] in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." All we know for certain of our Lord's life, up to the time of his manifestation to Israel, may be summed up in the few following facts:—Dutifulness to his earthly parents in childhood; diligence in business as a carpenter, like his fellow-men, in youth and early manhood; devotion to his heavenly Father all through his childhood, youth, and manhood—from his earliest to his latest breath. St. Mark overleaps all the preceding period, and makes our Lord's entrance on ministerial life the starting-point of his Gospel. It is as though, impatient of delay, he hastened onward to the mighty issue, and acted on the well-known principle—

"But to the grand event he speeds his course,
And bears his readers with resistless force
Into the midst of things."

4. *Practical observations.* (1) Long, laborious preparation is needed for the life-work, when that work is to be a noble one, and that life a real success. It was thus with Moses; it was thus with Jesus; it was so with Luther and other reformers; it has been so all down the centuries with the men who have blessed the world and benefited their race. (2) The example of our Lord dignifies honest industry and ennobles daily toil. (3) A spurious sentimentalism, like the apocryphal Gospels, is apt to busy itself more with the childhood and youth than with the manhood and ministry of the Saviour.

II. THE GOSPEL. 1. *Meaning of the term.* The original word rendered "gospel," or "good news," meant in Homeric times a reward given to the bearer of good news, or a sacrifice offered on account of good news; but in gospel days it signified the good news itself. 2. *Its embodiment.* This good news centres in a Saviour whose proper name is "Jesus"—indicating the nature of his work, "for he will save his people from their sins;" his official title is "Christ"—the Messiah, or Anointed One, promised to the fathers, and thus solemnly inaugurated in the high functions, prophetic, priestly, and kingly, which he was called to discharge; while his designation of "Son of God" implies his two-fold qualification, namely, dignity of nature and possession of power for the accomplishment of the great redemption, God's remedy for sin. The good news is inseparable from the person of the Saviour—at once human and Divine, from the works he did, from the truths he taught, and from the sufferings he endured; and thus it is embodied in him. 3. *Its extent.* Its range is most extensive, including salvation for the lost, life for the dead, grace for the guilty, pardon for the penitent, bread of life for the hungry, and living water for the thirsty soul. Good news! no wonder the evangelist is in a hurry to make known such good news. 4. *Its essence.* The essence of the gospel may be expressed in a few sentences; its sum and substance may be compressed into the compass of a few short statements of Scripture; yea, the whole is contained in that single Scripture, "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;" or in that other Scripture, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin;" or in that third Scripture, "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." 5. *Its epithets.* The epithets applied to it are instructive, as indicating some of its many features. It is "the gospel of peace," for its contents proclaim "peace on earth and good will towards men," as well as "glory to God in the highest." It is called "the gospel of salvation," because it saves as well as sanctifies. It is styled "the glorious gospel," from its glorious influences—enlightening the understanding, purifying the heart, renewing the will, regenerating the soul, sanctifying the whole man—body, soul, and spirit; while at the same time it elevates the mind to God and heaven and eternal things. It is "the everlasting gospel," for it is

still the same, though change and alteration are the very essence of this world; it remains the same amid all the ups and downs of time; and its blessed results are durable as eternity itself. It is "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," for he is the Alpha and Omega of it; he is the Source from which all its benefits and blessings flow; he is the Guide to the ways and means by which we become partakers of the same. Whether, therefore, we consider it as the gospel of God, or the gospel of his grace, or the gospel of peace, or the gospel of salvation, or the glorious gospel, or the everlasting gospel, or the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, it justifies its claim to be the "godspell," or glad message, or good news, which the name implies. 6. *Its effects.* Good news, then, is the subject to which the evangelist, at the very outset, calls our attention. Good news! Oh, how the heart beats in the prospect of good news! How the pulse throbs in expectation of good news! How many a heart beats wildly when the postman's knock comes to the door! How many a bright eye becomes still brighter when the precious little letter, which brings good news from friends abroad or friends at home, is put into the hand! Now, the best news that ever fell on the ear, or met the eye, or gladdened the heart, of mortal man, is this gospel of the Son of God. It has quickened many a dead soul; it has gladdened many a sad heart; it has filled many a drooping spirit with joy unspeakable; it has led many a pilgrim of earth onward and upward to the glories of heaven.

III. UNION OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES. In vers. 2, 3, the evangelist binds together as in one volume, and unites with better than clasps of gold, the Old Testament and the New. He brings into closest connection the canon of the former with that of the latter. They are, indeed, the twin lips of one and the same Divine oracle. Accordingly, he bridges over the chasm of four hundred years between the last prophet of the Old Testament and the first prophet, or rather precursor of the Saviour, in the New. The ministry of John and the mission of the Saviour had been expressly foretold by the prophets Isaiah and Malachi—the prediction of the former was *primary*, that of the latter *secondary* and subordinate. Consequently, treating Malachi's as prefatory and introductory, announcing the messenger and his function, he fixes attention mainly on that of Isaiah, as containing the message itself, and the actual ministry with which the forerunner was charged. The name of Malachi is therefore omitted, for the correct reading, as given by the critical editors is, no doubt, "in Isaiah the prophet."

IV. THE VOICE THE PROPHET HEARD. The prophet Isaiah, as we may picture his position, is looking away, with straining eyes, into the distant future of his people; he is listening, with outstretched neck and ears eagerly attentive, for any intimation of their redemption; but in vain. No vision is granted, no promise vouchsafed. He does not, however, despair; he keeps looking and listening and looging for something to strengthen his faith or encourage his hope. All is hushed around, and again he listens with bated breath; but hark! at length he hears a sound. It is a voice away in a distant desert land; it is waking the echoes of the wilderness. "It is the voice of one crying." It is just a voice, and seemingly nothing more—not unlike that bird of which the poet writes—

"Shall I call thee bird,
Or but a wandering voice? . . .
Thrice welcome, darling of the spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird: but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery."

We must not confound John with the voice, as those who translate the expression of the prophet, "a voice crying;" but understand the voice as his chief characteristic or main peculiarity, as in secular authors we read of the strength of Hercules, the virtue of Scipio, the wisdom of Lælius, or as when Cicero in a disparaging sense affirms that, on the removal of Catiline, he had nothing to fear from the drowsiness of Lentulus, or the corpulence of Cassius, or the mad rashness of Cethegus.

V. DISTRICT OF JOHN'S MINISTRY. Kings, when setting out to visit the remote provinces of their kingdoms, were usually preceded by heralds to announce their approach and pioneers to prepare the way—removing obstacles, clearing away impediments, and so making rough places smooth; bridging streams, filling up valleys, levelling hills,

and so causing a straight, direct road to take the place of a circuitous and devious route. Some preparation like this was made for Alexander the Great when he marched to the Indus, and more so still for Semiramis in her progress through Media and Persia. Likewise in Vespasian's march to Galilee a detachment was appointed "to make the road even and straight, and, if it were anywhere rough and hard to be passed over, to plane it, and to cut down the woods that hindered their march." The necessity for such preparatory measures would be increased in a desert district without roads, or with roads so bad as to be almost impassable. When Jehovah restored the Hebrew exiles from Babylon to their own land, the region through which they had to pass was dreary and desolate, and in some places pathless. To the preparation of a way through the difficulties of such a district for the returning Hebrew exiles, with the great king at their head, the words of the prophet primarily referred. This, like other great events in the cycle of Jewish history, was, no doubt, typical of that moral waste in which the people were when Jehovah came again for their redemption in the person of Messiah. Very appropriately, therefore, did John choose for the scene of his ministry the wilderness of Judæa. This comprehended the eastern slope of the hills from Jerusalem and Hebron, down the Jordan valley to the western shore of the Dead Sea and the banks of Jordan—a wild region, in many places rough, rugged, and rocky, with sparse, if any, population, some spots of pasture-ground, and few or no trees. Here it was that the Baptist made his appearance (*ἐγέρετο*)—"comes forth" (*παρὰγίγεται*, St. Matthew). A difficult work awaits him in preparing Messiah's way: humble and contrite ones are to be elevated; proud and lofty spirits to be brought low; the crooked ways of crafty men to be made straight; rough, untutored natures to be softened; and moral obstacles of every kind to be removed, in order that, the way being thus prepared, the march of Prince Messiah might be unhindered.

VI. DISTINGUISHING RITE OF THE BAPTIST'S MINISTRY. 1. *Proselyte baptism.* In connection with the ceremonial law of the Jews, there were "divers washings." Such baptisms or ablutions were practised by them from the earliest period of their polity. Originally appointed by Divine authority, they were incorporated as part and parcel of the national religion. Their design was an important one, for they were intended to serve as symbols of that purity which was required in all true worshippers of Jehovah. On the eve of the giving of the Law to Israel, and of that people's gracious admission into covenant with God, a great national assembly took place—the various Hebrew tribes spreading over the desert and round the base of Sinai, the Lord directed Moses, saying, "Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai;" while, in consequence of and in obedience to this direction, "Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes." Further, when strangers from among the surrounding nations embraced the Jews' religion, they were washed as well as circumcised; and that washing was called "baptizing unto Moses," or proselyte baptism. This rite, notwithstanding the assertion of some to the contrary, appears to have existed before our Saviour's time, and to be evidently implied in several passages of the New Testament. It was, moreover, a rite which sprang naturally out of the opinion commonly current among the Jews that all mankind were in an unclean condition, and so incapable of admission into the covenant of Israel, unless and until they were baptized or washed, in token of being purified from their state of moral uncleanness. 2. *Position of John's baptism.* But what, it is necessary to inquire, was the position occupied by the baptism of John? What was its relation to other similar ablutions? In reply we answer that the baptism of John was neither proselyte baptism on the one hand, nor Christian baptism on the other. It was *not proselyte baptism*, for that was administered only to proselytes, that is to say, converts to the Jewish faith, whereas John baptized Jews; and this alone will account for the misgiving and alarm which the baptism of John caused to the Jewish authorities. Hence the question of the Pharisees, as recorded in John i. 25, "Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?" The prophet referred to, it may be remarked in passing, was probably Jeremiah, whose revivescence as a forerunner of Messiah the Jews expected, believing, according to an old legend, that he would restore, or reveal the hiding-place of, the ark of the covenant.

the tabernacle, and the altar of incense, which he had hid in Pisgah, at whatever time God should gather his people together. The Pharisees could have readily understood the baptism of Gentile proselytes into the Jewish faith, and such baptism by John could have produced no uneasiness and caused no alarm. Instead of occasioning pain, it would have given them pleasure, as the admission of converts into the Jewish Church by such baptism would have contributed to their own ecclesiastical importance, and tended to augment the numerical power of their party. But the disquieting circumstance about it was that it was Jews whom John baptized; and what were they to make of that? What were these zealots for Judaism to think of the administration to Jews of a rite which had only been administered to Gentile proselytes; and the administration of which was either the formal introduction into a new faith or the first inauguration of a new dispensation? It was this that aroused their fears and excited their apprehensions. They saw clearly that John's baptism was the dawn of a new dispensation—a dispensation destined, as they rightly suspected, to subvert in a certain sense, or at least supersede, the old. In their alarm they accordingly ask, "If thou art not that Christ himself, who, we are taught to believe, will inaugurate a new dispensation; nor Elias, his forerunner; nor that prophet, be it Jeremiah or some other of the old prophets who shall reappear on earth at Messiah's advent;—why baptizest thou then, seeing it is not Gentile converts to Judaism, but Jews themselves, that are admitted to your baptism?" John's baptism, then, was not proselyte baptism. Neither was it *Christian baptism*, as we learn from Acts xix. at the beginning, where certain disciples at Ephesus, who had been baptized into John's baptism, were rebaptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. "Unto what then were ye baptized?" asks Paul. "And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." With this agrees the sentiment of an ancient Greek Father, the purport of which is that John's baptism was more than Jewish baptism, for it involved repentance as well as water baptism; it was less than Christian, for it was not with the Spirit, as Christ's was.

VII. DOCTRINE PREACHED BY THE BAPTIST. The doctrine he preached was the doctrine of repentance for the remission of sins. He called their sins to mind, summoning them to confession and contrition; while this proper sense of, and sorrow for, sin showed them their need of a Saviour and prepared them for his salvation. In token of repentance commenced and to be continued, and of the power of him whose reign was now beginning, to cleanse the truly penitent from all sin, he baptized them with water unto repentance. Thus, while John proclaimed the advent of the new dispensation, he prepared for it and prefaced it by a most appropriate and significant rite. On this Theophylact comments as follows:—"But whither did this preaching of repentance lead? To the forgiveness of sins, that is, to the baptism of Christ which had the forgiveness of sins."

VIII. DRESS OF THE BAPTIST. Everything was in perfect keeping with the strange surroundings of the Baptist. His dress, his diet, and his discourse were all in harmony with the desert where he ministered. His dress was neither gorgeous nor gay like that of a king's herald; it was of the coarsest and roughest kind. His garment was made of cloth of rudest texture, woven out of camel's hair; he was girded not with the rich linen or highly ornamented girdle of the Oriental, but with a cincture of untanned hide, like the prophets' raiment of early times; just such as Elijah wore, and such as Zechariah speaks of when he refers to the rough garment as the proper prophetic costume, and as such assumed by false prophets in order to deceive.

IX. DIET OF THE BAPTIST. His diet was as plain as his dress. His food was not sumptuous, but of the simplest sort; scarce sufficient to keep soul and body together—the honey of the wild bee, which he found in the fissure of the rock or clefts of trees, and the locusts of the wilderness. The honey was not that which exuded from trees, but the veritable product of wild bees; nor were the locusts the sweet pods of the locust tree, but the real locusts still used for food by the Bedouin of the desert. "He also," says Thomson in 'The Land and the Book,' "dwelt in the desert where such food was and is still used; and therefore the text states the simple truth. His ordinary 'meat' was dried locusts—probably fried in butter and mixed with honey, as

is still frequently done. The honey, too, was the article made by bees. . . . Wild honey is still gathered in large quantities from trees in the wilderness, and from rocks in the wadies, just where the Baptist sojourned, and where he came preaching the doctrine of repentance."

X. DISCOURSE OF THE BAPTIST TO THE COMING CROWDS. 1. *Audience addressed.* The persons who went out to John's ministry are described by St. Luke as crowds or multitudes (*ὄχλοι*); but they are distinguished by St. Matthew as comprehending two component parts, or two contending sects, namely, Pharisees and Sadducees, that together made up the main body of the nation. To the Gentiles, for whom St. Luke wrote, the distinction would have little meaning and no interest; to the Hebrew Christians, for whom St. Matthew wrote, it would convey the fact that the crowds that flocked to the Baptist's ministry were made up of the two religious sects of Judaism promiscuously. In his audience were Judæans and Jerusalemites—people from the country and the capital; and dwellers in all the region round about the Jordan (*περίχωρος*), Samaritans, Galileans, Peræans, and Gaulonites. 2. *His discourse denunciatory.* His discourse breathed the spirit of a reformer and evinced the power of a reformer. He denounced most scathingly the ritualistic Pharisee and the rationalistic Sadducee—traditionist and scripturist alike; high and low, rich and poor. He spared the shortcomings of no class, the iniquities of no rank, and the sins of no individual. The plea of ancient privilege and of pious ancestors he treated with scorn, telling such as resorted to those refuges that God could, and would if necessary, raise up children to Abraham out of the stones that lay scattered through the valley, or the shingle that strewed the strand of the Jordan, or those huge boulders—those memorial stones which Joshua had set up near the bank of that historic river. This expression, by the way, though apparently harsh, may allude to Isa. li. 1, 2, "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you." 3. *His discourse menacing.* He threatened the vengeance of heaven on all who refused to repent and return to God. The woodman's axe was already brandished to fell the trees that continued barren. The axe was brought into unpleasant proximity to such trees—not to the branches merely, but was laid to the very root; in fact, lies at it (*κείται*). The fatal blow was ready to be struck at any moment. In view of anger so imminent, he urges all to flee from the wrath to come—to repent, and not only profess, but prove, their repentance real by fruits answerable to such profession; "If then (*ὅν*) you are as anxious as you seem to escape that storm of future wrath, bring forth fruit suitable to genuine penitence." 4. *His discourse effective.* The various classes that had resorted to his ministry were roused to a sense of danger. The terror of the alarmed multitudes took shape in the question, "What, then, shall we do?" Just as on the day of Pentecost, the men of Israel, pricked to the heart, addressed themselves to Peter and the rest of the apostles, asking, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And just as the Philippian jailor, in his wild alarm, trembling and falling down before Paul and Silas, cried out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 5. *Directions to different classes.* The reply in this case inculcated a lesson of charity and sympathy—the person who had two tunics or under garments (*χιτῶνες*), besides his outer garment (*ἱμάτιον*), was to impart to the poor starveling who had not even one. So with food of all forms and every kind (*βρώματα*), as well as raiment. Such were the directions addressed to the multitudes (*ὄχλοι*); while the difference between these directions and those addressed to the two following classes deserves notice. To the former (the multitudes) he said, "Do good;" to the latter (publicans and soldiers) he said, "Abstain from evil;" to the one the direction is positive, to the other negative. To the former he said, "Learn to do well;" and to the latter, "Cease to do evil." The publicans again, who were looked on as trading on their country's degradation, he forbade to continue their unjust exactions and dishonest dealings; while the soldiers on their march (*στρατεύμενοι*), whether those of Antipas marching against his father-in-law Aretas, or otherwise, he commanded, in reply to their numerous and earnest inquiries (*ἐπηρώτων* imperf.), to forbear extortions either by threats or false accusations—neither to concuss the poor by the former, nor force money out of the pockets of the rich by the latter: also to be content with their *ages* (*ὀψωνίους*; literally, *boiled fish, rations, soldiers' pay*).

XI. FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF MESSIAH. By this time the crowds assembled

round the Baptist were on the tiptoe of expectation. At this period expectations of some great deliverer were rife both in Gentile lands and among Jewish people. It is not strange, then, that the multitudes who had listened to the instructions of the Baptist reasoned within themselves whether haply John himself were the Christ. He had already, it may be presumed, given a definite answer to the priests and Levites deputed by the Sanhedrin to ascertain his claims. But now he feels called on to make a more public announcement. 1. *Transition*. All along he never once lost sight of his office as harbinger or herald (*κηρύσσων*) calling attention to the coming One. Yet gradually the office of herald was merging in that of the evangelist; hence the employment of *εὐαγγελίζετο* in the parallel passage of Luke, at the eighteenth verse. Ever more and more John seeks to turn attention from himself to Jesus, to whom he acknowledges himself as inferior in rank as in office. The meanest slave that brought his master's sandals, or stooped down in lowliness to undo the latchet that bound them, stood to the mightiest earthly master in a higher relation than John to Jesus; while the work of the latter was proportionately superior. 2. *Superiority*. The one administered the symbol, the other the thing signified; the one baptized with water, the other with the Spirit; the one was a light as of a lamp (*λύχνος*) kindled by, and reflecting, a borrowed light, the other was that central source of light (*φῶς*); the one was the morning star, soon to wane, and wishing to wane, before the other, who was the sun himself going forth in his strength.

“Where is the love the Baptist taught,
The soul unswerving and the fearless tongue?
The much-enduring wisdom, sought
By lonely prayer the haunted rocks among?
Who counts it gain
His light should wane,
So the whole world to Jesus throng!”

J. J. G.

Vers. 9—11. Parallel passages: Matt. iii. 13—17; Luke iii. 21—23. *The baptism of our Lord*. I. *DIFFICULTY*. There is something singular, to say the least, in the baptism of our Lord. In that solemn inauguration of the Saviour, as he entered on his public ministry, a difficulty is encountered. That difficulty respects the significance of the rite in relation to the spotless Son of God. Water, when applied to the person or used in the way of ablution, is employed as an element of cleansing. But the idea of cleansing necessarily carries along with it the notion of defilement. The thought of pollution, from whatever source derived, or in whatever way contracted, or in whatever it may consist, is inseparably connected with it. Cleansing has as its natural and necessary correlative uncleanness either expressed or implied.

II. *INAPPLICABLE TO OUR LORD*. Yet the Saviour was not only holy, harmless, and undefiled in life; but at his birth and in the very nature of his humanity, he was free from every taint and unsullied by the least stain of sin, as it is written, “Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God,” or more literally, “Therefore also that which is born of thee, being holy, shall be called the Son of God.” It is probable that the Baptist felt at once the awkwardness of his own position, and the incongruity of administering to One so perfectly pure and undefiled a rite which, as the symbol of cleansing, implied a previous condition or natural state of impurity and defilement.

III. *THE BAPTIST'S RELUCTANCE*. In view of the circumstance just mentioned, as well as of the overwhelming superiority of the Divine applicant, John expressed such extreme lothness to administer the rite. Nay more, that reluctance took the form of a somewhat firm refusal: “But John,” we read, “forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” The imperfect *διεκάλυεν* may imply the *commencement*, that is, began to prevent, or be used *de conatu* of the endeavour to prevent, while the prepositional element imports activity and earnestness in the effort. It was only after a remonstrance on the part of the Saviour, and after he had pointed out to John the propriety of the course, that the Baptist yielded. The reason alleged by our Lord, while it was sufficient to overcome the scruples of the Baptist, is serviceable to us in inquiring into the nature of the ordinance then administered. True, that

reason is expressed in somewhat general terms, as follows:—"Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness;" but wherein this righteousness consisted, and how it was fulfilled, we proceed briefly to investigate.

IV. PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST. It will be borne in mind that our Lord, though a priest after the order of Melchisedec, and superior to that of Aaron, was nevertheless the great Antitype of the Aaronic priesthood. The priest of the Aaronic order was typical of the great High Priest of our profession. The rites of consecration in the one case may, therefore, be regarded as helpful in elucidating the mode of inauguration in the other.

V. CEREMONIAL OF CONSECRATION. At the ceremonial of consecrating the Aaronic priest, there was (1) anointing with oil, and (2) washing with water. The oil was emblematical of the Spirit, the water of separation from all that would unfit for the service of the Holy One; the anointing with oil signified the bestowal of the needful endowments, the washing with water the impartation of the necessary moral qualities; the one has reference to the gifts, the other to the graces, required for the proper and efficient discharge of the priestly functions. It was thus with the type, while, in the case of the Antitype, the figure was realized in the fact; the sign gave place to the thing signified. In other words, the unction of the Spirit took the place of the anointing with oil; the washing with water, which in reference to the Levitical priest denoted the necessity for purity in the service of God, and entire separation from anything that would defile, implied, in relation to the Redeemer, the actual possession of that purity in its highest perfection, and of that separation from all possibility of defiling or contaminating influence.

VI. REFERENCE TO PRIESTLY CHARACTER. 1. Accordingly, the baptism of our Lord had respect to the priestly character he sustained, not to any human imperfection that required to be repented of, or impurity that needed to be removed; so that the righteousness which it behoved to fulfil was conformity to the rite of priestly consecration; while the type merged in the antitype, and the figure gave place to fact. He was now about thirty years of age (the Levitical period) when he began (*ἀρχόμενος*) his ministry. 2. Another explanation solves the difficulty by giving prominence to the representative character of Christ. He came as the representative of a people guilty in God's sight, and morally unclean; and as he afterwards bore their sins in his own body on the tree in order to expiate their guilt, so now he was baptized vicariously because of their uncleanness, in token of his purpose to purge away their filth. "He was baptized," not as though in need of it himself, but on behalf of the human race; and such is the opinion of Justin Martyr. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh—made sin for us, and so numbered with and treated as a transgressor. 3. Other explanations of the matter, still less probable, have been given, as for example (1) that it was the perfection and proof of humility; and (2) that it was for the purpose of being made manifest to the people, and that in presence of so great a concourse the Baptist might bear testimony to his Messiahship; which appears to be the view of Theophylact.

VII. THE PRESENCE OF THE TRINITY. At the baptism of our Lord the three Persons of the blessed Trinity were present or represented. The voice of the eternal Father came ringing down out of the cleaving heavens as they were rending asunder; the Holy Spirit in dove-like form descended; the beloved Son was the subject of the former, and the recipient of the latter. Thus Father, Son, and Holy Spirit inaugurated the Christian dispensation at its commencement; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit impart the grace and bestow the blessings of this dispensation during its continuance; while Father, Son, and Holy Spirit shall share the glory at its close. And so in the beautiful words of the *Te Deum*—

"The holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee:
The Father of an infinite majesty;
Thine honourable, true, and only Son;
Also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter."

VIII. THREEFOLD TESTIMONY. Thrice during our Lord's public ministry a voice from heaven testified to his Messiahship—once at his baptism as just noticed; once on the Mount of Transfiguration; and once during Passion week, in the courts of the

temple, as we read in the Gospel of St. John, xii. 28, "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

IX. TRIPLE RECORD. Again this acknowledgment of the Father puts honour on the Divine Word, for, from the three leading divisions of it—the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms—that acknowledgment is taken. The words, "Thou art my Son," are taken from the second Psalm; from Genesis, the first book of the Law, xxii. 28, we have the expression, "My beloved Son;" while in the Prophets, namely, Isa. xlii. 1, we find the remaining clause, "In whom I am well pleased."

X. CHANGE IN THE BAPTIST'S PREACHING. The Galilean valley and the Judæan desert were far separate. Though closely allied by kinship, and more closely still by oneness of spirit, John and Jesus had grown up apart; their first actual contact was at the baptism of the latter. Personal acquaintance there had been none; or if there had, it did not contribute to the Baptist's recognition of his Messiah. Either by a conversation of which we have no record, or by direct revelation immediately before the baptism, the important fact was made known to the Baptist. Be this as it may, one very remarkable effect resulted from it. The style, and indeed the subject, of the Baptist underwent an entire change. Previously his manner had been denunciatory; subsequently it became conciliatory. Before he had borrowed his imagery from the harsh features of the surrounding desert—the rude rocks, the poisonous vipers, the barren tree; or from the rough ways and works of agricultural life, such as may have existed on the verge of the wilderness—the threshing-floor, the winnowing implement, and the worthless chaff. But now he tempers and softens his mode of speech with figures from the sanctuary and its service—the lamb slain, the sin sacrifice, and the expiation. We hear no more of viperous broods—vipers themselves and sprung from vipers; no more of fruitless trees, fit only for the fire; no more of stones taking the place of sons, that is, of *abanim* becoming *banim*; no more of the sifting and separating process by which the good grain would be garnered and the worthless residue gathered into heaps for burning. On the other hand, we read of the Lamb as the Sin-bearer, and salvation as the blessedness secured; in other words, we have the blessed truth first uttered by the Baptist's lips, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" The legal has given place to the evangelical. The first phase—equally needful and equally useful, it is true—of the Baptist's preaching is exhibited by the synoptists; the second—softer, sweeter, and superior in tone and tendency—by the penman of the fourth Gospel, the evangelist and beloved apostle John.

XI. THE BAPTIST'S FUNCTION THREEFOLD. The commission of the Baptist embraced three functions: 1. Herald-like, he was to prepare the way for the coming King by calling men to repentance. 2. He administered, on their full confession (*ἐξομολογούμενοι*, equivalent to making a clean breast of it), the rite which served as a pledge that their conviction of sin was real and their service sincere—that, in fact, they wished to act in conformity with such a direction as that of the prophet, "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes." In all this, however, they might merely have an eye to the penal consequences of sin, and to that sweeping storm of coming wrath to which sin exposed them; and thus proceed no further than legal repentance. 3. But a yet higher office was to announce the kingdom of heaven as come down on earth, and point to the advent of its King; in other words, to direct the eye of *faith* to Messiah as the great Sin-sacrifice and the only Saviour. Repentance alone, especially of the legal kind referred to, could not merit the remission of sins; neither could baptism, nor yet the combination of both together: the real meritorious cause was the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God—the Lamb slain; while faith, that faith from which true evangelical repentance is never separate, was the link of union between the soul of the penitent and his Saviour. Thus John virtually preached faith as well as repentance; for his repentance-baptism derived its whole meaning and validity from faith in Christ. Evangelical repentance commences with Christ, the cross, Calvary, and is "the tear in the eye of faith" directed thereto, for, looking to him whom we have pierced, we mourn. Of this we have tolerably plain proof in the words of St. Paul (Acts xix. 4), "Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, in Christ Jesus."—J. J. G.

Vers. 12, 13. Parallel passages: Matt. iv. 1—11; Luke iv. 1—13.—*The temptation.* I. THE REALITY OF THE TEMPTATION. The above passage of St. Mark, and the parallel passages of the other Gospels, contain the record of one of the most remarkable transactions in the Word of God. It records the temptation of the Son of God. It describes not a fiction but a fact—not a phantom scene, such as a poet's fancy delights to paint, nor a daydream that merely passed through the imagination of the Saviour, but a literal and historical reality. The whole is a narrative of a mysterious yet actual event. It is Satan, personally, that acts the part of the tempter; it is the Saviour, personally, who is tempted; it is the Word of God that is the armoury furnishing the celestial weapons by which the temptation is resisted and the tempter foiled.

II. THE FACT OF THE TEMPTATION AND ITS IMPORTANT BEARINGS. 1. *Proof of its reality.* That the event here recorded was an actual fact, a real transaction, is proved by the different expressions employed by the evangelists. Thus, St. Luke says he "was led by the Spirit;" St. Matthew, that he "was led up of the Spirit;" and St. Mark, that "the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness." Similarly Ezekiel, among the captives on the banks of the Chebar, says of himself, "The Spirit lifted me up, and took me away;" so Philip was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord; so also John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day." 2. *The Saviour's first conflict.* The temptation was our Lord's first conflict with that enemy whom he came to contend with and to conquer. It was at the same time the last part of his preparation for his work and warfare. It made him aware of the dangerous devices of the adversary; of the mistakes that would certainly mar, and of the mismanagement which might possibly make his undertaking miscarry. His person, his work, his deportment, were all concerned. In his *person* identified with the human as well as the Divine, he was debarr'd from using the resources of the latter to raise him above the common wants and sinless weaknesses of the former; and in remembrance thereof he says, "*Man shall not live by bread alone.*" Self-abnegation, not self-gratification, was the law of his life. In his *work* he behaved to stand aloof from the ways of the world, eschewing the plans and plots, and all those many means of questionable character, by which men have struggled for dominion and grasped at glory. The spirit of his work was non-conformity to this world; the nature of his kingdom was spiritual, not of this world; the way to reach it was self-sacrifice; the crown was to be gained, but only by the cross. In his *deportment* there was to be no ostentatious display of close kinship with the eternal Father, no proud presuming on that high relationship, no capricious exercise of Divine power. In due time he would be "declared" the Son of God with power. Accordingly he repels this assault with the strong language of intense abhorrence, if not indignation, saying, "Thou shalt not tempt out and out (*ἐκνευδοῖς*) [to an extreme altogether intolerable] the Lord thy God." 3. *The weapon he wielded.* Once and again, moreover, the lesson of his childhood—the section of the Jewish Law that was written on the frontlet and thus familiar to every Hebrew youth—he called to his timely aid, and held up to the tempter as the old standing Scripture (*γέγραπτα*, equivalent to "it stands written"), the ever-abiding truth never to be departed from. 4. *The key to the narrative.* The key to the entire narrative is contained in the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews, iv. 15, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin;" and again in the same Epistle, ii. 18, "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." From these Scriptures we learn that the design of Christ's mission to mankind was twofold; it was not only to make an expiation for our sins by his death, but to be a perfect example for our imitation in his life. He was tempted, therefore, in order that he might be an example to us when called to encounter temptation. He was tempted, moreover, in order that he might be able to sympathize with and succour us when tried and tempted; as the poet has beautifully as well as truly said of him—

"Touched with a sympathy within,

He knows our feeble frame;

He knows what sore temptations mean,

For he has felt the same.

Then let our humble faith address
His mercy and his power,
We shall obtain delivering grace
In every trying hour."

5. Forewarned. In the conflict of the Saviour with Satan, as narrated in the Gospels, we have the prototype of, and precedent for, the perfect believer, showing us what manner of adversary we have to contend with, how he fights, how he is resisted, how he is overcome; showing us also the arena on which we have to maintain the struggle, what weapons we must wield, how certain our victory will be when we use those weapons aright, as well as the true source of conquest and of triumph, on which we are to depend. Now, there is much truth in the old proverb, "Forewarned is forearmed;" and if this be true of conflicts where carnal weapons are employed, it is also true of that spiritual conflict which every Christian has to carry on with the great enemy of God and of goodness—of the soul and of salvation. Accordingly, the passage under consideration warns us of the adversary and of his devices, that we may not be ignorant of them; of the boldness of his assaults and the mode of his attacks; of what he did in a green tree; and of how much more powerful the fire of his temptation may be expected to be in a dry; of his repeated attacks on him of whom we read, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." How much more severe and repeated attacks of this great adversary may be expected by us, in whom a wicked heart within and a wicked world without combine to render temptation successful! For who among us has not felt the truth of the sentiment—

"A wicked heart and wicked world,
With Satan are combined;
Each acts a too successful part
In harassing my mind?"

6. Forearmed. Further, the lesson of the passage arms us with weapons of resistance and defence, which, if used duly, diligently, and dutifully, will enable us to resist the devil and force him to flee from us. It implies, moreover, the important duty incumbent on every Christian to guard against all appearance of evil, to check the first risings of evil in the heart, to resist the first suggestions of the evil one, to watch and pray, and apply God's Word, that we may not enter into temptation. And all this the more, that Satan's onsets are so daring and his designs so murderous; his arguments so specious and his schemes of ruin so subtle; his plan being our enslavement to himself and sin, while his purpose is to pay us the hard-earned wages of transgression. "What fruit had ye then," asks the apostle, "in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death."

III. THE FORMS OF THE TEMPTATION IN GENERAL. **1. Striking similarity.** There is a remarkable and instructive similarity between the temptation of the first and that of the second Adam; and also a vast dissimilarity. The similarity consists in the means and manner of the temptation; but a world-wide difference is presented in the result. There are three powerful principles of human nature, of which Satan takes advantage, and to which he adapts his temptations. These principles are "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" spoken of in Scripture. These have been called this world's Trinity. By means of these Satan tempted the first Adam, and succeeded; by the same means he attempted to ensnare the second Adam and failed. In tempting the first Adam he plied him with the lust of the *flesh*; for the tree of knowledge of good and evil, of which God had forbidden man to eat, was good for food, and so fitted to gratify the lust of the flesh and lead to the indulgence of carnal appetite. He tried him by the lust of the *eyes*; for the forbidden tree was pleasant to the eyes, and so adapted to gratify their lust and produce covetousness. He tried him by the *pride of life*; for it was a tree to be desired to make one wise—to make man as God, knowing good and evil, and so suited to the pride of life, prompting and fostering pride of heart. In all this Satan succeeded. He knew the baits to lay, and when and how to lay them. Besides, the first Adam was of the earth, earthy, and we, alas! have all borne his image; for "as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death has passed upon all men for that all have sinned." Now, as Satan had been so successful with the first Adam, it is not to be wondered at that he should try the same mode of procedure

in framing his temptation for the second Adam. Accordingly, he tries him first by the lust of the flesh, tempting him to change stones into bread, and so moving him to the indulgence of *appetite*. Next he tries him by the pride of life, tempting him to throw himself down from the temple's pinnacle, and so, in sight of the inhabitants of the holy city, to prove his deity and show forth his glory, employing the upbearing protection of glorious angelic hosts. Thus Satan does his best to move the Saviour to the sin of *pride*. Once more he tries him by the lust of the eyes, exhibiting to his vision a panoramic view of all the kingdoms of the world, or showing them to him stretched out before his eyes in widespread perspective. He offers him all these and all their glory, and so he endeavours to move him to *covetousness*. We have here followed the order in which the temptations occur in St. Matthew's narrative. 2. *Dissimilarity of sequel*. All Satan's temptations were in vain as regarded our Lord. The first Adam fell in Eden, a garden the fairest and loveliest ever planted on earth; the second Adam overcame triumphantly on the bleak and dreary wild. A paradise of earthly glory was lost by the first; the paradise of God was secured for us by the second. 3. *Special adaptations*. But not only did these temptations of our Lord correspond to the three forms of temptation which brought death into our world and all our woe; they correspond to the three portions of man's composite nature, that is to say, body, soul, and spirit. The body needs bread to satisfy its natural cravings, and the temptation is to procure it independently of Providence. The soul is also appetitive, though in a different direction, and in its outlook contemplates a wide sweep and vast dominion; the temptation is to secure all this at a single bound, overleaping the wearisome way of suffering and self-sacrifice. The middle place between the purely carnal and the purely spiritual is this visual illusion. The spirit rules in man over body and soul, and so liability to pride opens the way to temptation; and here the temptation is to put to the test his eternal Sonship, and to prove by one splendid miracle the truth of his Messianic claims. Thus the appeal was to *appetite*, to *avarice* or aggrandizement, and to *ambition*; in other words, to poverty, power, and pride;—following, as we do here, the order of St. Luke's Gospel. 4. *Reason of this difference of arrangement*. But why is this difference of arrangement between St. Luke and St. Matthew, the former reversing the relative position of the second and the third temptations as recorded by the latter? Why change the order? Mill's solution is, perhaps, the right one; at all events, it is very plausible and very probable. It is to the effect that while the flesh is the first avenue of assault in all men, the tempter varies his tactics in the case of the other two, and in accordance with the difference of temperament, leading some by the way of pride to ambition, but others, in reverse order, along the road of ambition to pride.

IV. THE FEATURES THAT DISTINGUISH EACH TEMPTATION IN PARTICULAR. 1. *Individual traits of the first temptation*. The exact gist of the first temptation is, "If thou art the Son of God, exercise thy lordship; if the Son of God, prove thy possession of that power; if the Son of God, what profit is there in this Sonship? What good will this birthright do you?" Now, a compliance with the suggestions of the tempter would have been practical denial of that very Sonship and virtual distrust of the Divine Fatherhood. While we do not and cannot dispense with bread, we must depend on God as Israel of old waited for the word that brought them food. This is in strict accord with the training of the Saviour's childhood as shadowed forth in that portion of Deuteronomy, namely, vi. 4—9, that formed the frontlet already mentioned, and in entire harmony with his own teaching in the sermon on the mount, where he says, "For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." The evil one—at once Satan the adversary, and Diabolos the accuser—now puts forth all his power. The temptation had doubtless continued all those forty days of fasting (*τελειόβρωτος*, present participle implying such continuance), but now it culminated. (1) *The scene suitable for Satan's purpose*. The scene of this first temptation is placed by some at Quarantana, but by others it is transferred to Sinai. The former is much the more probable. And so the scene was a district of country that lay eastward of Jerusalem, overlooking the valley of the Jordan, and not far from the place where Jesus had been baptized by John in the waters of that river. It was very wild and very dreary and very desolate. This much might be inferred from the name of "wilderness" by which it was designated, but especially from the additional circumstance supplied by St. Mark, that he was there "with the wild beasts," which laired, no doubt, in the

thick brushwood along the banks, or among the caves of the neighbouring hills. In addition, therefore, to the natural horrors of the place, were those wild beasts with hungry jaws and glaring eyes and frightful cries, just waiting to seize him as their prey. Few, if any, human feet had trod this particular portion of that wild; no human habitation stood there; no village, or town, or city was to be found in its immediate vicinage. Consequently no supply of the necessities of life was obtainable there; no food, no refreshment of any kind, was to be had there. Take in connection with all this that our Lord had fasted forty days and forty nights, and we must admit that such a place and such a time and such circumstances were the best possible for the success of such a temptation as that with which Satan first plied the Saviour. (2) *Possibilities*. No doubt it was *easy* for him who was "declared the Son of God" with power, who could multiply a few loaves and fishes into food for multitudes, who could transform the water-pots of Cana into vessels of wine, to turn the loaf-like stones of the wilderness into actual loaves (*ἄρτοι*) of wholesome bread. Further, it was but *natural* for him to do so when he was suffering such severe privation, when pained with the pangs of want, when distressed by hunger, which, as the old saying has it, "will break through stone walls." Moreover, was it not right to do this when no other way of relief appeared accessible, and when ordinary means of sustenance were out of reach? Not so, however. (3) *Things ever so plausible not therefore proper*. A thing may be ever so plausible in the eyes of man, and yet not proper in the sight of God. Notwithstanding all the plausibility of Satan's suggestion, had the Saviour yielded he would have been forestalling the providence of God; shown distrust in the provisions of that providence; renounced the exercise of patience; doubted the resources of that heavenly Father who had commissioned the voracious raven to bring flesh to his prophet, who long before had supplied his people's wants without their sowing or reaping, and that in a wilderness and for forty years, raining down bread from heaven every morning throughout that period round the camp of Israel. Still more, he would have been renouncing that abnegation of self—that poverty, humility, suffering, and sorrow, which were all, and more, included in the conditions of the covenant. He would have put aside the bitter cup of suffering without raising it to his lips, much less draining it to the dregs. He would have faltered at the first step, and so defeated the whole undertaking. Interests of greatest moment were at stake: the life or death of millions was in the balance; the weal or woe of countless human beings was depending on the decision of that moment; souls immortal were to be saved or sacrificed by the action of that hour. (4) *The Saviour victorious*. Angels, we doubt not, looked to see the issue, perhaps in terrible suspense; but it lasted not an instant. The conflict in this case is scarcely commenced, when the Son of God comes off the conqueror and Satan is repelled. The sword of the Spirit was the instrument of victory. The tempter is reminded that man is not dependent on bread alone; there are many other things called into existence by God for human food, and everything so appointed, be it root, or fruit, or berry, or tuber, or plant, or scorn, will, by the Divine blessing, serve the end. Besides, while the body is still craving and saying, "Give, give," there is another part of man, which must be supplied with spiritual nourishment, and which it is death to neglect. The soul lacks spiritual food. It feeds on the hidden and heavenly manna. (5) *Practical use of this first temptation*. (a) *To see the subtlety of Satan's snares*. We may now look at the practical bearing of this first temptation expressed in the words, "Speak a word of power in order that these stones may become bread or loaves—speak them by a word of power into bread;" though *ἵνα* with the subjunctive is not for the infinitive after *εἰς* in the sense of command, but as Stolz translates, "Sprich ein Machtwort damit diese Steine Brod werden." If we reflect on the antecedents and the accompaniments of this temptation, we cannot conceive of anything more specious. The time was that moment when he began to be so hungered; when the sinless cravings of appetite began to be felt; when, in instructive parallelism with Moses at the promulgation of the Law from Sinai, and with Elias at its restoration on Carmel, the Saviour at the fulfilment of the Law and the introduction of the gospel fasted forty days and forty nights. By entering in this manner on the activities of his great mediatorial work, he teaches us, by the way, the importance of retiring for fasting, meditation, and prayer before commencing any very important duty in the service of God. The time was thus well chosen; for when the Saviour, being subject to all the sinless infirmities of humanity, began to feel the gnawings of hunger, just then Satan, who is as vigilant as

he is malignant and murderous, took advantage of the moment at which appetite, after being so long whetted, had become keenest, and urged the change of stones into bread to meet the wants of nature. But the *place* as well as the time appeared to second the speciousness and seeming propriety of this suggestion. It was just such a place as that of which the Psalmist says, "They wandered in a wilderness in a solitary way . . . Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them." Nothing eatable could be obtained; no esculent of any kind was to be met with. The *circumstances* also added to the speciousness of Satan's suggestion, and seemed to render the working of a miracle as proper as it was plausible. The Saviour had been declared and openly acknowledged as the Son of God. He is alone in a desert, hungry, without any possibility of supply, and yet "the Son of God with power." In such a case it was natural enough and reasonable enough to all human seeming for Satan to say, "If you really possess the power, why not exert it at a time when it is so much needed, and in a place where it is so indispensable, no suitable supply being otherwise procurable? If the Son of God, and in want, why not utter a creative word and relieve that want? If invested with sufficient ability, why not speak an omnific word and display that ability? If capable, why not work a miracle when it is so necessary, and when there can be nothing wrong in the act; for to turn stones into loaves of bread is in itself no more amiss than to turn water into wine?" Thus tempted Satan. Thus by plausible and powerful reasonings he backed his temptations. (b) *To shun those snares is the next practical use to be made of this temptation.* However specious and subtle, it is our interest as well as our duty to shun them; and the more specious and subtle they are, the more needful it is to be on our guard against them. Oh, how subtle the tempter is! He takes advantage of our circumstances, he takes occasion from our wants, he adapts his assaults to our weaknesses. The poor and needy he tempts to discontent, sometimes even to dishonesty. Are you poor? Then, says Satan, scruple not to supply the necessities of nature. Are you unable to rise in the world by fair means? Then use foul. Are you in low circumstances? Then try the tricks of trade. Are you necessitous? Then employ dishonesty in your dealings, or resort to fraud in some shape, or even have recourse to force. Are you given to appetite? Then Satan will tempt to excess in food, or drink, or both. "Use the world," says God. "Abuse it," says Satan. "Be temperate in all things," says God. "Never mind," says Satan, "live while live you can, 'eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow you die.'" His temptations too, as we have seen, are most plausible. He often seems to be urging us to what is good and proper, or even to what tends to promote the glory and honour of God. But the more plausible a temptation is, and the more appearance of good there is in it, the more dangerous generally it is, and the more destructive it may prove. In the temptation we are considering, had the Son of God yielded, and by miracle turned stones into bread, however justifiable the act at first sight appears, besides betraying distrust in Providence and disregard of the Divine will, he would have failed in the exercise of submission, and so in setting an *example* to his followers. God will have his children, when they are in want, to wait on him and wait for him; Satan tempts them to do neither. God assures his people that he is merciful and gracious—that he knows our frame, and will supply our wants in his own good time and way; Satan tempts to hard thoughts of God, and to doubt or distrust his paternal care. God witnesseth with our spirits that we are his children, just as he had done to the eternal Son; Satan strives to weaken that testimony, and tempts us to question our sonship. God tells us that afflictions not only consist with, but come from, his fatherly hand, for "whom he loveth he chasteneth;" Satan tempts us to regard them as evidences that God has forgotten or forsaken us. (c) *Scripture is the sword of the Spirit we must wield.* Now consider the Saviour's reply to this first temptation. He might have met the tempter with a positive declaration, "I am the Son of God." He might have asserted his lordship over him. He might have subdued him instantly by Almighty power. But in so doing he would only have left us an exhibition of omnipotence to astonish us, not an example to attract us. On the contrary, he takes away the ground of the temptation by appealing to the Divine Word. His answer was, "It is written [stands written], Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," or more simply, as in St. Luke, "by every word of God." Thus he put honour on the Divine Word, and at the same time put into our hand a weapon of greatest power for our individual defence. He shows, moreover, that, though man ordinarily lives by bread,

yet that any word proceeding out of the mouth of God, anything created by God's word and by that same word commended to be used for food, will serve the purpose. "He can either," says Bishop Hall in his 'Contemplations,' "sustain without bread, as he did Moses and Elias; or with a miraculous bread, as the Israelites with manna; or send ordinary means miraculously, as food to his prophet by the ravens; or miraculously multiply ordinary means, as the meal and oil to the Sareptan widow." Christ, therefore, needed not to turn stones into bread; he only needed to trust in his heavenly Father for a seasonable and suitable supply. Hence we learn that, while bread is the staff of life, God's blessing is the staff of bread. We may want bread, and yet be nourished by some other means; we may have bread, and not be satisfied. In our greatest abundance we must not think of living without God; in our greatest indigence we must learn to live upon God. Ordinary means of succour and support may fail or be cut off; the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no meat; yet are we to rejoice in the Lord and joy in the God of our salvation. (d) *Spiritual life needs nourishment suited to it.* Bread, by the Divine blessing, supports the life of the body; but there is a higher style of life that needs for its sustenance more than bread, and which bread alone cannot maintain. There is the life of the soul, the life of the immortal spirit; that spiritual life depends for support on every word of God. "Thy words were found," says the prophet, "and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart;" and Job says, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food;" while the Saviour himself says, in reference to the same life, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." And if we would live this truer, higher, nobler life, we "must all eat the same spiritual meat," feeding on the Word of God and following the will of God.

2. *The special character of the second temptation.* This second temptation is an appeal to avarice or aggrandizement or covetousness. As Moses saw the land of promise from the top of Pisgah, so Satan brings the Saviour to "an exceeding high mountain." A mountain is still pointed out as the mount of the temptation. Its name is Quarantana, and its height nearly two thousand feet. "It is distinguished," says Kitto, "for its sere and desolate aspect even in this gloomy region of savage and dreary sights." From its summit Satan shows him "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. Whether by "world" is to be understood the Holy Land, then divided into several petty principalities; or the Roman empire, comprising many conquered kingdoms as its provinces; or the world in its widest sense, we stop not to inquire. Neither do we attempt to explain what power of optics commanded such a prospect, or how the horizon widened and widened till the world, with its political divisions as well as physical features, spread out, before the two solitary spectators on yon mountain-top, like an unfolded chart; or how especially all this was accomplished in a moment or second (literally, *point*) of time. The Scripture states the fact, and we believe it; the *how* of it we are not curious to discover, nor do we think it necessary to define. Some think the whole subjective; we take the whole to be objective. Milton, it is true, speaks of the specular mount, and amplifies the scene described from it, as a poet and a scholar; and yet there is good reason to believe that his realistic interpretation is in accordance with the Scripture representation, as he sings—

"Here thou behold'st
Assyria, and her empire's ancient bounds,
Araxes and the Caspian lake; thence on
As far as Indus east, Euphrates west,
And oft beyond, to south the Persian bay,
And inaccessible, the Arabian drouth."

(1) *Attempt to realize the stupendous spectacle.* The imaginings of the poet had their foundations in fact. Looking to the right, they saw the cities and countries peopled by the numerous children of the East—the once powerful empire of Persia, the equally powerful and still more ancient Babylonia, the distant Indus, and the remote Chinese. Looking northward, they saw the nomadic hordes of Scythia stretching far away towards the frozen arctic regions. Westward they saw the many provinces conquered by Roman valour and then subject to Roman rule, the sunny shores and isles of Greece, the amalga-

mated races that peopled the Italian peninsula, the savage tribes of Germany, the gallant men of Gaul, and the far-off inhabitants of Britain. Southward they saw the unconquered Arabs, the polished Egyptians, the sunburnt dwellers of Ethiopia, the Lybians bordering on the desert, and other sable sons of Africa. "All these shall be yours at once, and without an effort on your part, if you fall down and worship me, or rather do homage before me." (2) *Satan's title.* What claim, we may well ask, had Satan on these kingdoms? What right dared he to assert over them? His claim was that of usurped dominion, for it is only by usurpation and for a little space that he is god of this world. No doubt he affirms, "It has been entrusted to me;" and he is called "the prince of this world," and "the prince of the power of the air." His right is only, nowever, that which sinful men have given him—that of alaves to a tyrant master—conceded to him by those whom he leads captive at his will. "Those myriad idolaters are mine," he said. "Those unbelieving Jews are mine. Those sinners of every tribe, and race, and name are mine; they are of their father the devil, and my bidding they are prompt and prepared to do." Thus spake, we may conceive, the usurper. Thank God! his usurpation will one day end, his works shall be destroyed, he himself for ever bruised and his power broken. But he presumed to add, "To thee will I give this power and all the glory of them." (3) *His disingenuousness.* He showed the fair side of all. He kept away in the background the foul ways and sinful means by which kingdoms often have been won, the bloody battles, the cruel massacres, the wicked plots, the diplomatic schemes, by which crowns have been gained; the cares that attend them, the anxieties that perplex them, the thorns that line them, for often "uneasy rests the head that wears a crown." All this Satan is ready to give. But why act so disingenuously? Why not state the drawbacks? Ah! this is never Satan's way. He shows the best part of the picture; the darker background he keeps out of view. He exhibits the fascinations of sin; he conceals its bitterness. He recounts its pleasures, not its pains; its seductions, not its sorrows; its allurements, not its sufferings and its sadness. Besides, his promises are lies. He never keeps his word; he never means to do so; he never performs his promise. (4) *The Saviour's indignant rejection of Satan's offer.* No wonder the Saviour, wearied of Satan's intrusions, of his impertinence, of his insolence, of his insults as well as assaults, repels him rudely, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (5) *Satan's dupes and dependants.* Satan is, no doubt, a mighty prince; his hosts are the world-rulers of the darkness of this age, his bait the love of power. The world-rulers (*κοσμοκράτορες*), the Pharaohs, the Herods, the Cæsars, snatched at that bait, accepting the evil one as their master. And so he tempts the Saviour too, as though he said, "Why not be a king like other kings? Let your kingdom be of this world; I object not to its being the greatest and the mightiest; otherwise I will oppose thee." Thus far Satan. But the Holy One again repels the evil one by Scripture. Again he appeals to the lesson of his childhood—the words of the frontlet, recognizing the allegiance due to God. (6) *Practical lesson from the second temptation.* Satan is still lavish in his offers and liberal in pressing them on all. He offers the world, its praises, its profits, its pleasures; but he must have a *quid pro quo*, a full equivalent. He insists on your making a return for his favours, on your reciprocating his benefactions. He wants you to worship him. He will have you sacrifice your soul in his service. Disguise it as he may, he will have nothing else and will accept nothing less. Satan is proverbially good to his own; but that goodness is only seeming, and even in its seeming short. The way of duty is the way of safety. For though evil triumphed for a time, though the day of its downfall were far distant or not to be dreamt of, though there were no such thing as retribution, and though no period of redress appeared likely; still to be guided by the Divine Word, to imitate the Saviour, and to render allegiance to God alone, will be found in the end the happiest, the wisest, and the best.

3. *Nature of the third temptation.* It is an appeal to ambition or pride. Some, however, are of opinion that this is a temptation to an experiment in order to test whether the Divine presence or the Divine protection pertained to Sonship, rather than a temptation to an effort in order to gain power and popularity with the people. In favour of this view is the history from which the tempter is answered. The people had called in question the Divine presence, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?" They required a supernatural proof to assure them of it. Similar conduct on the part of the Saviour to

that of Israel on the occasion referred to would have been sinful distrust. Here, as afterwards, he could have bidden to his aide legions of angels; but in either case he forbore. Obedient trust in God and determined opposition to Satan were the principles that guided the conduct of the Saviour, and that ultimately gained the day. (1) *The acme of Satan's subtlety.* The pinnacle or battlement of the temple was, doubtless, the royal portico built by Herod and "overhanging the ravine of the Kedron." It stood on the very edge of the precipice and towered up to an immense height. From the top of this giddy eminence Josephus tells us that no eye could see the bottom. "Cast thyself down," said Satan, "and the Jews, who are on the look-out for a temporal prince, will take you at once, and make you their king, and render ready homage to thy sceptre. Cast thyself down, and other nations, who are all expecting some great potentate to appear in order to usher in an age of unexampled blessing, will all make common cause with them, and form one united and world-wide empire. Thus Jew and Gentile, in happy harmony, shall bind the diadem of royalty round thy brow, and so crown thee Lord and ruler of all. In any case," says Satan, "and whatever be the result, you lose nothing by the experiment. You run no risk by the attempt; for is it not written, 'He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee'?" (2) *Suppression of Scripture.* Ah! here is the masterpiece of the evil one. Here we see how he can adapt himself to the exigencies of every case. Here we see his skill in imitation. Here, after the example of the Saviour, he appeals to Scripture. "What," says an old divine quaintly, almost quizzically—"what is this I see? Satan himself, with a Bible under his arm and a text in his mouth." But then he misquotes by suppressing part of the sentence, and so altering the sense of the whole. Undoubtedly God had promised, "He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee *in all thy ways*;" but this latter clause Satan found it convenient to omit. Thereby we are taught that the way of duty is the way of safety; wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness and paths of peace. When we walk in these ways God has promised to keep us safe. Off them we jeopardize ourselves every hour. "Not so," says Satan. "Go where you like, walk as you like, take my word for it, you are safe." Thus Satan misquotes, misinterprets, and misapplies. Thus he said to our first parents, in direct contravention of God's word, "Ye shall not surely die." Thus was he "a liar and a murderer from the beginning." Thus he continues to lead men blindfold to the brow of the precipice, and bids them cast themselves down, telling them there is no danger, and assuring them of safety. Thus he plunges men in misery. Thus he brings them to perdition. Thus he sinks them in the deep abyss. (3) *His tactics are still the same.* "Cast yourself down," he says to some; "sin is an easy and safe descent. The way of virtue is hard and uphill; don't trouble yourself about it. Cast yourself down, wallow in your beloved lust, take your fill of your besetting sin; God is too merciful to mind it, or at least to punish it. Cast yourself down before the god of gold, like Israel before the golden calf, that you may be elevated in worldly rank and be exalted among thy fellows." Again, to children of God he says, "Cast yourselves down. The gospel mystery of sanctification is slow work and a roundabout way; try penances, fastings, macerations, pilgrimages, will-worship, and thus expedite it." Perhaps he waxes bolder and says to another, "You are a child of grace: once in grace always in grace; you may indulge in sin with impunity, or that grace may abound, or that God may get glory and you more grace by repentance. Cast yourself down; the sin you dread is a trifle—is it not a little one?" These are only a few specimens of Satan's subtle snares and manifold devices. To those in high places he whispers, "Cast yourselves down. Place is before principle; expediency rather than consistency." To others again, "Cast yourselves down. Become slaves to luxury, or sensuality, or vice; your means warrant it, the circumstances justify it. Cast yourselves down. Thousands do worse, while few do better, and it will be all the same in the end." (4) *The third repulse.* That pinnacle was a *high place*, and high places are slippery places; they are difficult places; they are dangerous places. Comparing this temptation with the former, we are reminded of the wise man's words, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." Our Lord's reply repulsed Satan in this quarter also. It was, "Thou shalt not tempt [literally, *out and out*, or to an extreme] the Lord thy God." You are not to run unbidden into danger; you are not to run against the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler; you are not to pray, "Lead me not into temptation," and then dash into it; you are not to venture into a perilous position, where neither necessity, nor Providence, nor duty calls you: you are not to

plead the covenant of God while you disregard its conditions; you are not to appropriate promises that in no way apply to your character or conduct.

CONCLUDING REMARKS. 1. The battle of life is largely a *battle for daily bread*. In far northern regions it is extremely difficult; in the tropics it is exceedingly easy. It has been well remarked that neither extreme has conduced much to the world's progress; it is for the most part the dwellers in the temperate zones, where labour for the support of life is only ordinarily difficult—equally removed from the extremes of severity and facility, that have helped onward the march of civilization, of science, of art; in a word, human improvement and human culture. 2. As we are to watch as well as pray to avoid temptation, so we are *to labour* as well as pray for daily bread—labouring as if all depended on our work, praying as though work formed no factor in the process. 3. The first temptation tended to carnal appetite and distrust of Providence; the last, to ambition and proud presumption on the Father's protection. The first presupposes want; the last, abundance. The first teaches a lesson to the *poor*; the last, to the *rich*. And just as the wilderness was suitable to the first, so the world-famed city was a proper place for the last; for Jerusalem was the glory of Palestine, the pride of all the land, while "the temple was the glory of Jerusalem, the pinnacle the highest point of the temple." 4. Observe the *extremes* in Satan's temptations—the first was to despair and to distrust in Providence; the last, to pride and presumption. The tenor of the final suggestion was, "Cast thyself down. If thou art supported by his providence, thou wilt be sustained by his protection. Cast thyself down. When people see thee fling thyself from the high precipice and receive no hurt, all men will then own thy Godhead and acknowledge thy Divine commission. Jerusalem and the Jews will acknowledge it and admit thou art more than man—even 'the Messenger of the covenant,' coming suddenly and sublimely to his temple. The work of Messiahship shall be facilitated and shortened; while every one will be at once convinced of thy claims. Besides, when, or where, or how, could a better opportunity be had for declaring publicly and powerfully thy glory and thy Godhead, thy dignity and design?" And yet the arch-tempter was signally foiled and the Saviour gloriously victorious. He bruised Satan's head; and in Christ and through Christ we—even we shall, by Divine grace, be enabled to bruise Satan, and that speedily, under our feet. 5. Satan, having completed *every* temptation, that is, every typical form of temptation, as though all temptations are resolvable into one of the three, "departed from him," but only for a season, or rather *until an opportunity* (*ἄρτι καὶ ποῦ*), that is to say, until another opportunity should occur or some new opportunity present itself, either by way of suffering or situation—negative endurance or positive enticement. 6. Angels ministered to him. The necessity for this arose from the desert district in which he found himself. The statement in St. Mark's narrative that "he was with the wild beasts" is generally understood to imply that the region was wild in the extreme, desolate, and full of terrors, like Virgil's "Vitam in sylvis inter deserta ferarum lustra domosque traho;" may it not rather, or also, assign a reason for the ministering of angels mentioned in the next clause, as rendered absolutely necessary from the total absence of all human help and distance from all the resources of civilized life?

INTERVAL. Between the temptation, according to St. Mark's brief record, and our Lord's Galilean ministry many things had taken place, as we learn from the evangelist John. Into that interval a Judean ministry of rather uncertain duration and of much importance must be interjected. We are dependent entirely on the fourth Gospel for the narrative of that ministry. But, though unrecorded by the synoptists, it is nevertheless implied and referred to by them.

CONNECTING LINKS. In the intervening period the following circumstances transpired:—1. The testimony of the Baptist to Jesus, already referred to; the adhesion of two of John's disciples to Jesus, Andrew bringing his brother Simon to him; our Lord's return to Galilee, where Philip findeth Nathanael and bringeth him to Jesus; the marriage in Cana. 2. Our Lord's first Passover at Jerusalem as the Son of God, the Messiah promised to the fathers, together with the expulsion of the traders; his discourse with Nicodemus, who came to him by night; his leaving Jerusalem, but remaining some time longer in Judæa; further, a final testimony of the Baptist; his setting out for Galilee after John's imprisonment; his discourse with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, near Sychar, as he passed through Samaria on his way to Galilee; his return to Cana

and cure of the nobleman's son at Capernaum; his rejection at Nazareth and settled abode at Capernaum.—J. J. G.

Vers. 14, 15. Parallel passages: Matt. iv. 17; Luke iv. 14, 15.—*The Galilean ministry.* I. His PREACHING BEGAN IN GALILEE. Though our Lord's public ministry may be regarded as having commenced at that Passover at Jerusalem to which reference has been already made, yet his public appearance as a preacher was in Galilee. The place, the date, the subject are all distinctly marked by St. Peter in the tenth chapter of the Acts, at the thirty-seventh verse, as we read, "That word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching the *gospel* [good tidings] of *peace* by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)—that saying ye yourselves know, which was published throughout all Judæa, beginning from *Galilee*, after the *baptism* which *John* preached."

II. A FAVOURABLE FIELD. Now commence our Lord's labours among the towns and villages of Galilee—a sphere of operation of the most promising kind at that period. Of the four provinces of Palestine in the time of Roman rule, while Judæa was south, Samaria central, and Peræa east, Galilee was in the north. Originally it comprehended only a limited circle or circuit, as the name *Galil* imports, round Kedesh-Naphtali, including the twenty towns which Solomon gave to Hiram, but it grew into much larger dimensions till it included the four northern tribes, Asher and Naphtali, Zebulun, and Issachar, embracing an oblong twenty-five miles from north to south and twenty-seven from east to west. It was divided into Lower and Upper Galilee; the former district consisted mainly of the plain of Esdraelon or Jezreel, and the latter, containing the district between the Upper Jordan and Phœnicia, was called Galilee of the Gentiles because of its mixed population—Greeks, Arabs, Phœnicians, as well as Jews. This northern province of the Holy Land in the days of our Lord was studded with towns and even cities, had a thriving population, and abounded in hives of busy industry. Speaking of our Lord selecting this district as the scene of his labours, the late Dean Stanley says, "It was no retired mountain-lake by whose shore he took up his abode, such as might have attracted the Eastern sage or Western hermit. It was to the Roman Palestine almost what the manufacturing districts are to England. Nowhere, except in the capital itself, could he have found such a sphere for his works and words of mercy." The husbandman that tilled the fields, the merchantman that traded in the towns or villages, the fisherman that plied his craft on the waters of the lake, and labourers standing in the market-place,—all these and many such abounded in this populous region; and while easily accessible, and willing to wait on our Lord's ministry, they were more free from prejudice—less bigoted and less exclusive than their brethren of the southern province.

III. THE DISTRICT POINTED OUT IN PROPHECY. Ancient prophecy had marked this region out as that where gospel light would shine most brightly. These northern tribes, Zebulun and Naphtali, had soonest sunk into idolatry through the influence of their idolatrous neighbours, the Phœnicians, on the west, and had suffered sorest from Assyrian invaders from the east, most of them having been carried captive by Tiglath-pileser and their land re-peopled in large part by strangers. The prophet, however, in order to console and in some measure compensate, foretold a good time coming in Isa. ix. 1, 2, which rightly rendered reads thus: "There shall not hereafter be darkness in the land which was distressed; as in the former time he brought to shame the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, so in the time to come he bringeth it to honour, even the tract by the sea [*i.e.* the western shore], the other side of Jordan [the eastern side], Galilee of the nations [*i.e.* district north of the sea]. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." Thus henceforth the scene of the Saviour's ministry lies by the Jordan, the Lake of Gennesaret, and in Galilee of the Gentiles—

"What went ye out to see
O'er the rude sandy lea,
Where stately Jordan flows by many a palm,
Or where Gennesaret's wave
Delights the flowers to lave
That o'er her western slope breathe airs of balm?"

"Here may we sit and dream
Over the heavenly theme,
Till to our souls the former days return;
Till on the grassy bed,
Where thousands once he fed,
The world's incarnate Maker we discern."

IV. THE SUBJECTS OF OUR SAVIOUR'S PREACHING. The precursor had been imprisoned in the castle of Machærus, some nine miles east of the Dead Sea, in the district of Peræa; but the Prophet himself takes up the work. Thus it ever is. God buries his workmen, but carries on his work. The great theme of the Baptist, as we have seen, was repentance and correspondent reformation, yet with faith implied. The theme of repentance was resumed by Jesus, but with the other doctrine of faith not implicitly but explicitly taught. The doctrine of faith now comes into prominence—the doctrine of faith, and that not merely bare credence or simple assent to the good news, but faith in—reliance on the gospel as the great and only means of safety and salvation. He proclaims, moreover, the advent of Messiah's reign. That critical epoch had now come; that greatest era in all human history had arrived.

V. DIFFERENCE IN THE USE OF TWO SYNONYMOUS TERMS. The kingdom is usually called by St. Matthew the "kingdom of heaven," and not "kingdom of God," lest the latter expression might confirm the Jews, for whom in the first instance the evangelist wrote, in their erroneous apprehension of it as a great kingdom of a worldly and temporal kind, as by a Hebrew idiom the name "God" is joined to anything excessively great or extremely grand; thus, we read of the "river of God," of "the cedars of God," and other similar expressions. By St. Luke, on the other hand, it is called the "kingdom of God" and not the "kingdom of heaven," lest the Gentiles, for whom this evangelist specially wrote, should misapprehend the expression as countenancing local divinities, as they were accustomed to gods and goddesses of different localities or quarters of the universe, such as Naiads, Nereids, Dryads, Hamadryads; gods of the ocean and of rivers; deities of the ethereal and infernal regions. This kingdom had been foreshadowed by Daniel in his vision of the great world-powers.—J. J. G.

Vers. 16—20. Parallel passages: Matt. iv. 18—22; Luke v. 1—11.—*The call of the first four disciples.* I. PREVIOUS AND LESS FORMAL CALL. Our Lord now calls to his side the first four disciples—Andrew and John, Peter and James. With the former pair he had already made acquaintance when they were disciples of John the Baptist. The account which St. John in his Gospel gives of the matter is complementary, and throws light on it, enabling us to understand more clearly how it was that these two brethren showed such alacrity and readiness in now obeying the Saviour's *more formal* call, and in following him. Andrew was one of the two disciples whose attention the Baptist directed to Jesus as "the Lamb of God," and John was in all probability the other, though, with his usual reserve, he does not name himself in the narrative. These two were privileged to spend a day with Christ, by special invitation, from ten o'clock in the morning, if we adopt the modern reckoning; otherwise from four p.m. Andrew was the means of bringing his brother Simon Peter to Christ, and John may have rendered the same signal service to his brother James. In the interval between the first and this more formal call, these disciples had returned to their daily duties, biding their time till the Master would require their more special and active services.

II. THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT OF ANDREW. The Christian spirit is in its very nature missionary. As soon as Andrew, with whom in one sense the Christian Church begins, got good for his own soul, he wished to share it with others; soon as he found Christ for himself, he set about making him known to others. His charity, too, begins at home, for he does not rest satisfied with the great discovery he had been favoured with, nor does he selfishly keep it to himself, he immediately goes in quest of his own brother, to communicate to him the good news. But though charity in his case began at home, it did not confine itself to such narrow domestic limits. On two other occasions we find Andrew similarly employed in bringing persons to Christ. It was he that brought the lad with the five barley loaves and the two small fishes to Christ, as we read in John vi. 8. Not only so; it was Andrew who, in company with his townsman Philip, introduced to the Saviour those Greeks who, having come up to worship at the feast,

expressed their earnest wish for that interview, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus." And now that Andrew, in the fulness of his brotherly affection, had brought Peter to Christ, Andrew and Peter were bound together ever after, in a dearer, because a double, bond of brotherhood. Here is an example worthy of imitation, and that not only by the brethren of the same family, but by dwellers in the same neighbourhood and members of the same community, who may have shared with us in the amusements of childhood or the employments of youth, or who still walk side by side with us in manhood on the journey of life. Nay, as far as in us lies, by proxy, if not in person, we must seek to be instrumental in bringing our fellow-creatures of every name and clime to the foot of the cross, and in thus winning the world for Christ.

III. THE EMPLOYMENT OF THESE DISCIPLES. While Andrew and Peter were brothers and joint-occupants of the same dwelling—as we learn from ver. 29, owing to St. Mark's attention to minute details—we are informed by St. Luke that James and John were partners in trade (*κοινωνοί*), i.e. in a sort of fishing firm, with Simon, and so sharers in the general profits of the little company. They were also fellow-workers, for they are called, some verses earlier in the same chapter, sharers in the work (*μετόχοι*). Diligence in business, whatever our employment may be, is an important duty, and one which God is sure to acknowledge and bless; while Satan is ever ready to find mischief for idle hands to do. Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, when the angel of the Lord, appearing unto him in that bush that burned with fire and yet was not consumed, sent him to bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt. Gideon was threshing wheat by the wine-press, to hide it, when he was summoned to save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Saul was making search for the lost asses of his father, when he was taken by Samuel and anointed with oil to be captain over the Lord's inheritance. David was tending a few sheep in the wilderness, when God called him to the high office of shepherd of his people Israel. Elisha was "ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth," when Elijah cast his mantle upon him in token of his becoming his assistant and successor in the prophetic office.

IV. THE PLACE OF THEIR WORK. 1. *Name of the lake.* "The Lake of Gennesaret," as St. Luke accurately calls this sheet of water so famous in sacred story, is termed "the Sea of Galilee" by St. Matthew and St. Mark, "the Sea of Tiberias" also by St. John, and in the Old Testament "the Sea of Chinnereth," i.e. *harp-like* in shape, of which "Gennesaret" may be a corruption, if the latter word be not derived from two Hebrew words meaning "gardens of princes" (*ganne sarim*) or "garden of Sharon" (*gan sharon*); while it gets the designation "of Galilee" from the province in which it is situated and that of "Tiberias" from the Roman emperor Tiberius, in compliment to whom the town Tiberias was so named by Herod Antipas, its founder. From this, too, comes the modern name by which the lake is sometimes named *Bahr-al-Tabariyeh*. 2. *The shape and size of the lake.* We have already referred to its shape as resembling a harp. It is somewhat oval, and very like a pear in form; while its length is twelve miles and a quarter by six and three quarters in breadth at its widest part. The depression of the lake is remarkable—between six hundred and seven hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean Sea. Its waters, reflecting the blue of the sky above, are clear, transparent, and sweet to the taste; while all sorts of fish, largely contributed by the numerous streams that enter it, abound therein. 3. *Scenery and surroundings.* The margin of the lake is surrounded by a level beach, here covered with smooth sand or small shells, there strewn with coarser shingle, and discernible as a white line encompassing the lake. This beach (*αιγιαλος*), so often mentioned in the Gospels, while laved on one side by the bright waters of the lake, is fringed on the other side in many parts by shrubs and oleanders with their rosy-red blossoms. From this shore-line rise gradually in most places the surrounding hills, though to no considerable height, with brown outline but ever-varying tints; while away in the distance are seen in white lines along the sky the snowy peaks of Hermon; also on the eastern side the undulating table-lands commencing in Gaulonitis run southward from Caesarea Philippi down to the Yarmuck, and onward through Perea. But coming close to the lake and commencing at Kerak, we proceed northward to the hot springs, near to which extend the ruins of Tiberias now Tabariyeh. This was the noble city where once "the Jewish pontiff fixed his throne," and where the Sanhedrin was established where, moreover, existed for three centuries

the metropolis and university of Judaism. Near this place are steep rocks and a mountain approaching the water's edge. Further north we reach Magdala, now a miserable village called *Mejdel*, where Mary Magdalene had her home. It is situated at the southern extremity of the plain of Gennesaret, now called *El Ghuweir*, "the little hollow." Here again the mountains recede, and this plain on the north-western shore of the lake is formed; its extent is two miles and a half long and one mile broad. It is now covered with brushwood and some patches of corn, though once so celebrated for fertility and beauty. The description of it by Josephus has been often quoted; it is as follows:—"One may call this place the ambition of nature, when it forces those plants that are naturally enemies to one another to agree together. It is a happy contention of the seasons, as if every one of them laid claim to this country; for it not only nourishes different sorts of autumnal fruits beyond man's expectation, but reserves them a great while. It supplies man with its principal fruits, with grapes and figs continually during ten months of the year, and the rest of the fruits, as they become ripe together, through the whole year; for besides the good temperature of the air, it is watered from a most fertile fountain." The abundant waters that irrigate this plain proceed from a large round basin of antique structure, called *Ain-el-Medawara*, or Round Fountain; or according to others, from the fountain called *Ain-et-Tabiga*. At the other or northern extremity of the plain are the ruins of *Khan Minyeh*, marking, perhaps, the site of ancient Chinnereth, but wrongly identified by some with Capernaum. Close to this is the Fountain of the Fig Tree, called *Ain-et-Tin*, with its rather indifferent water; and a quarter of an hour further in the same direction brings us to the little bay and great spring of *Tabiga*, supposed, as we have seen, by some to be that of which Josephus speaks as watering the plain of Gennesaret. A mile and a half further northward we find the ruins of *Tell Hum*, rightly identified, as we think, with the ancient Capernaum, *Keft-na-hum* being changed into *Tell Hum* by abridging the termination into *hum*, and substituting for *Keft*, a village, *Tell*, a heap, when a heap of rubbish was all that remained of it. If *Tell Hum* be in reality Capernaum, then *Kerazeh*, two miles and a half from the lake, and about two miles north from *Tell Hum*, is Chorazin. Two miles further onward bring us to mounds and heaps of stones called *Abu Zany*, at the northern mouth of the Jordan, identified by the author of the 'Land and the Book' with *Bethsaida* of Galilee—the native place of Andrew and Peter and Philip; while on the opposite bank are ruins which the same writer considers to be *Bethsaida* Julius. With the east side of the lake we have less to do, and the very few spots on that side of any importance have less interest for us. There is the very fertile and well-watered plain of *Butaiha* along the north-east shore of the lake, which bears a close resemblance to the plain of Gennesaret on the north-west shore. There are besides the ruins of *Kheresa*, the ancient Gergesa, on the left bank of the *Wady Semakh*; the remains of *Gamala*, on a hill near the *Wady Fik*; and the ruins of *Um Keis*, the ancient *Gadara*, a long way southward.

4. *State of matters at present.* In the days of our Lord and his disciples the fisheries yielded a profitable revenue, while one, perhaps two, of the villages on its shores, viz. Western and Eastern *Bethsaida*, "house of fish," got their names therefrom. The white sails of vessels, amounting to some thousands, were seen in its waters, from the ship of war or merchantman down to the fishing-smack or pleasure-boat. Its surface was astir with life and energy and joy. Now a single miserable bark is all that furrows its waves, and even that is sometimes difficult to procure. The noise and bustle and activities of numerous villages and towns are hushed in unbroken silence.

5. *The sacredness of this district.* Here indeed is holy ground. "Five little towns," says Renan, "of which humanity will speak for ever as much as of Rome and of Athens, were, at the time of our Lord, scattered over the space that extends from the village of *Mejdel* to *Tell Hum*;" the towns he refers to are *Magdala*, *Dalmanutha*, *Capernaum*, *Bethsaida*, and *Chorazin*. Elsewhere he says, "We have a fifth Gospel, lacerated, but still legible (*lacéré, mais lisible encore*)," in the harmony of the gospel narrative with the places therein described. It was here Jesus called his first disciples; it was here he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; it was here from its deck he taught the pressing crowds that lined the shore; it was here he walked upon the waters; it was here he stilled the storm; it was here, after his resurrection, he was known to the disciples by the great draught of fishes; it was here he directed them to bring of the fish thus caught and "come and dine." "What,"

says Dr. Thomson in 'The Land and the Book,' "can be more interesting? A quiet ramble along the head of this sacred sea! The blessed feet of Emmanuel have hallowed every acre, and the eye of Divine love has gazed a thousand times upon this fair expanse of lake and land. Oh! it is surpassingly beautiful at this evening hour. Those western hills stretch their lengthening shadows over it, as loving mothers drop the gauzy curtains round the cradle of their sleeping babes. Cold must be the heart that throbs not with unwonted emotion. Son of God and Saviour of the world! with thee my thankful spirit seeks communion here on the threshold of thine earthly home." Still more beautiful and touching are the verses of the sainted McCheyne on the sea of Galilee, of which, though so well known, we venture to cite the three following :—

"How pleasant to me thy deep blue wave
O Sea of Galilee!
For the glorious One who came to save
Hath often stood by thee.

"Graceful around thee the mountains meet,
Thou calm reposing sea;
But ah, far more! the beautiful feet
Of Jesus walked o'er thee.

"O Saviour! gone to God's right hand!
Yet the same Saviour still,
Graved on thy heart is this lovely strand
And every fragrant hill."

V. MANNER OF THEIR WORK AND ACTUAL ENGAGEMENT WHEN CALLED. Simon and Andrew were actually engaged in fishing when the Master called them; James and John were mending, or rather preparing (*καταρτίζοντας*), their nets. Here we are taught the right use and proper economy of time. When not actually engaged in the labours of our calling we may do much in preparing for it, either taking necessary rest and refreshment for our bodies, and so acquiring vigour by repose, or in getting our apparatus or equipments of whatever kind in readiness for the resumption of labour. *Different kinds of nets.* Three kinds of nets were used by the Galilean fishermen. There was the *δικτυον*, the most general name for any kind of net, and derived from *δικο*, I cast, a word akin to *δίσκος*, a quoit. It is sometimes used figuratively in the LXX., as *παγίς* is in the Pauline Epistle in the New Testament. Nets of this sort John and James were repairing when they were summoned by the Saviour. There was the *ἀμφίβληστρον*, from *ἀμφί*, around, and *βαλλώ*, I cast—the casting-net spreading out in a circle when cast into the water, and sinking by weights attached. From its circular shape it enclosed whatever lay below it. There was also the *σαγῆνη*, from *σάττω*, *σέσασα*, I load, which was a sweep-net of wide reach, and included a wide extent of sea. Hence it is used, according to Trench, in a parable, "wherein our Lord is setting forth the wide reach and all-embracing character of his future kingdom," and where neither of the other two words would have suited as well or at all.

VI. READY AND UNRESERVED COMPLIANCE. No sooner had our Lord said, "Hither, after me," as the original words literally mean, than these four brethren, James and John, as well as Simon and Andrew, at once obeyed the summons. St. Mark's words here are very expressive—they *went away or off behind him*—and imply the completeness with which they separated themselves from previous connections and severed themselves from past pursuits, as also the entire devotion with which they joined their new Master and commenced their new calling. They do not seem to have entered into any worldly calculations as to their present maintenance or future prospects, or to have counted the cost of the sacrifice they were called to make; neither did they consult with flesh and blood, or take into account considerations such as carnal policy is apt to suggest. They left all at once and for ever. What if their boats and nets were comparatively of small value or little worth in the estimate of the rich? Still to these fishermen the sacrifice was great, for it involved their worldly all.

VII. THE GOODNESS OF THE MASTER. Hardly, if ever, does Christ give us a precept that he does not add a promise to encourage us to, and help us in, the performance. If he bids us come to him, however weary and worn, sad and suffering and sorrowful we

may be, he promises to give us rest; if he bids us take his yoke upon us, he assures us it will be light; if he bids us seek, he promises we shall find; if he urges us to ask, he promises we shall receive; if he presses us to knock, he pledges his word that it shall be opened to us; and so of all the rest. Thus it is here, when he summons them to forsake their humble occupation of fishermen, he gives them the appropriate and characteristic promise to make them "fishers of men."

VIII. INSTRUCTIVE INCIDENT. True religion, instead of cutting the ties of kinship, as a rule consecrates them. Times of persecution, indeed, may separate us from the nearest relatives and dearest friends; for, unless we love Christ more than the nearest and dearest, we are unworthy of him. Still, such cases are exceptional. Here a beautiful circumstance is brought to our notice by St. Mark. John and James, when leaving their father Zebedee to follow their Master, were not forgetful of the claims of filial piety and natural affection. They did not leave their aged father helpless, but with "the hired servants." From this the obvious inference is that he would be still enabled to continue his ordinary business, and pursue his usual avocation as heretofore.

IX. INTERESTING INFERENCE. There is good reason to infer that, for his station in life, Zebedee was, as it is called, well to do. If not rich, he was not positively poor. He was in the happy mean which the wise man sought when he said, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." The boats and nets and hired servants bespeak the possession of at least a competence for one in his humble position yet honest walk in life.—J. J. G.

VERA. 21—28. Parallel passage: Luke iv. 31—37.—*The healing of a demoniac in the synagogue of Capernaum.* I. SYNAGOGUE SERVICE. It was the sabbath, and our Lord was teaching in the synagogue of Capernaum. The service of the synagogue was simple. In addition to the prayers, there was the reading of the Divine Word. First came the *Parashah*, or lesson of the Law; then followed the *Haphtarah*, or prophetic section. Hence we read, in the account of our Lord standing up to read in the synagogue of Nazareth, that the roll of the Prophet Isaiah was *further* given him (*ἐπεδόθη*), that is, in addition to the lesson of the Law already read, he was handed the prophetic section, to be read as the second lesson. Any competent person might be invited by the ruler of the synagogue or elders to discharge this duty, and afterwards address "a word of exhortation to the people," as in Acts xiii. 15.

II. OUR LORD'S OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH. Our Lord honoured the Lord's day, the house of God, and the ordinance of preaching which God has appointed for the instruction and edification of his people, as also for the explanation and enforcement of his Holy Word.

III. HIS MODE OF TEACHING. He was teaching, and, as we are told, "with authority, and not as the scribes." His *method* of teaching differed from theirs. Instead of appealing to precedents or citing the traditions of ancient rabbis, our Lord taught with independence, originality, and freshness, enforcing what he taught by his own authority. The *matter* of his teaching also differed from theirs. Instead of subtle, useless distinctions, almost evanescent differences, and trifling puerilities, he expounded the great things of God—his kingdom, grace, and glory. Still more than the mode of teaching or the truth taught was the manifestation of *power* in proof of, or at least accompanying, his teaching. The power by which he confirmed, and the evidence which he adduced in attestation of the truth, was something new and strange and unequalled. Hence the subsequent question, "What new teaching with respect to power?" or, "What new and powerful teaching is this?" for so we must read with the critical editors rather than with the received text, "What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits;" because "with authority" would regularly be *ἐν* or *μετ'* *ἐξουσίας*, rather than *κατ'* *ἐξουσίαν*. His teaching was accompanied with a novel exercise of power, not merely over the minds of men, but over beings of another race and belonging to a different sphere, even the spirits of evil. For one discharging the office of teacher to exercise such authority, and to put forth such power in commanding, coercing, and controlling such spiritual agencies, was unprecedented, and naturally enough led to the inquiry or exclamation

we are considering. It may be observed that in some copies of the Italic Version the "and" in the clause "and not as the scribes" is omitted, but erroneously, for the copulative is used of things different rather than of opposites. In case of things not merely different, but opposite or contrary, the omission of the copula is admissible, as in the next chapter at ver. 27, "The sabbath was made for man, [and] not man for the sabbath," though the English Version inserts "and," and Tregelles reads the clause with *καὶ*. On this occasion, then, of our Lord's teaching in the synagogue, the healing of the demoniac was effected.

IV. REALITY OF DEMONIAL POSSESSION. The subject of demoniacal possession has been so fully and frequently discussed that little remains to be said on it. Certain it is that, to any unprejudiced reader of the Gospels, such possession must appear an undeniable reality. This man in the power (ἐν) of an unclean spirit addresses Jesus, "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?" literally, "What is thy *ἔκκλησις* [understood] to us and to you?" In ch. v. Jesus commands the unclean spirit to come out of the man; and in the Gospel of St. Matthew (viii. 32) he suffers the demons to go away into the herd of swine. There can be no reasonable denial, then, of the actual personality of these evil spirits. Their presence and personality are distinctly and decidedly recognized in such Scriptures as those just mentioned.

V. NATURE OF THIS POSSESSION. The poor demoniac had, it would seem, a sort of double consciousness. His own will was dominated by a superior internal agent, who held him in terrible thrall. There was the human personality of the man possessed, as in the case of the Gadarene demoniac, who, when he had desecrated Jesus afar off, ran and worshipped him; there was the demoniac personality, or personality of the evil spirit, at the same time, which, employing the instrumentality of the man's organs of speech, cried with a loud voice, "I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not." His possession was not disease, nor was it madness; it was not physical alone, nor mental alone; it was not corporeal merely, nor spiritual merely; but a strange and shocking combination of both.

VI. WHY WAS DEMONIAL POSSESSION CONFINED TO OUR SAVIOUR'S TIME OF SOJOURN ON EARTH? The most perplexing question perhaps in relation to this matter is, Why was it that such possession occurred just at the time of our Lord's ministry on earth—apparently neither before nor since? Several answers have been given to it, such as the prevalence of certain diseases, whether bodily or spiritual, at particular periods of the world's history; the climactic pitch which moral disintegration and social disorganization had reached at the time of Christ's appearance on earth; the check given to such possession by the introduction of Christianity; our ignorance of cases of the kind that may still exist. There may be an element of truth in each of these; still they are each and all inadequate as an answer to the difficult question propounded, and we must seek for a more satisfactory solution in some other direction.

VII. SATAN'S POWER. The disrowned archangel, called now *Diabolos* the accuser, again *Satan* the adversary, is the acknowledged head of these *daimonia* or *daimones*. He is still, as we have seen in connection with the temptation, the prince of the power of the air, and the prince of this world to a lamentable extent. His knowledge is immense, yet he is not omniscient; his power is enormous, yet he is not almighty; his presence is little short of ubiquitous—"going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it"—yet he is not omnipresent; his resources for evil and for injury are amazing, yet they are not absolute. Happily, he is limited to some extent and restricted in some ways; he is not by any means infinite.

VIII. AN IMITATOR. With all his knowledge and power and resources, he is only an imitator at the best, and a destroyer at the worst. What God made he marred, as far as permitted to do so; what the Saviour does, he *imitates*. Accordingly, when the Son of God became incarnate, Satan or his subject-demons became incarnate too—at least, to the extent of entering and taking possession of the bodies of men. Again, when the dispensation became distinctly spiritual—when, after the Saviour's ascension, the Spirit was sent down—Satan confined himself also more to spiritual influences; that is to say, such influences as he still exercises over the spirits and minds of men.

IX. RECOGNITION AND CONFESSION OF THE SAVIOUR BY SATAN'S SUBJECTS. It need be no matter of surprise that, in person or by proxy, he is here found in the house of God, for such has been his practice from days of old. In the ancient time, when the

sons of God came together and presented themselves before the Lord, Satan came among them and put in an appearance too. Nor can it be reasonably doubted that he continues his custom of frequenting the place of religious assemblies still. To the present hour he is sometimes with the preacher in the pulpit, sometimes with the hearer in the pew, though in neither case to help, but, whether with preacher or auditor, to hinder and to hurt. So in the instance before us.

X. THE SAVIOUR'S REFUSAL OF SUCH ACKNOWLEDGMENT. His acknowledgment of the Saviour is sternly rebuked. "Be muzzled (*φιμώθητι*) and come out of him!" was our Lord's indignant command. The acknowledgment, we therefore conclude, was either the expression of fawning fear, or rather an effort of fiendish malice to compromise the Saviour's character, as though in league with Satanic power and the spirits of evil. If so, our Lord's acceptance of such acknowledgment would have tended to discredit his mission and to damage his work. Demons knew him, for Satan, their chief, had followed him on his mission of mercy to man. He had dogged his steps as if to find out his true relationship—if indeed he was the Son of God—and to foil and frustrate, as far as practicable, his redemptive work. He had encountered him in the wilderness, and by his own defeat had learnt with certainty that he was in truth the Holy One of God.

XI. A KNOWLEDGE THAT IS NOT SAVING. Though demons knew and confessed the Son of God, they had nothing to do with him, so that they could truly say, "What have we to do with thee?" Sad thought! These lost ones had nothing to expect at his hand but further, fuller, and final destruction. Alas! that any should know Christ as these evil spirits, acknowledge him, and yet have neither part nor lot in the matter! There is a knowledge that does not save, for it lodges in the head and never touches the heart; it makes itself known by profession, but never manifests itself in practice. There is a faith that only genders fear, but never gains forgiveness nor goes the length of favour; for devils believe and tremble. Blessed be God for the truth which, brought home to the understanding and heart and conscience by the Holy Spirit, saves the soul: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent!"

XII. SATAN AND HIS SERVANTS EVERMORE EVIL. The unclean spirit was coerced into obedience. When reluctantly compelled to obey, he resolved to work all the mischief possible. He tore or convulsed (*σπαράξαι*) the man, "threw him (*ρίψαι*) in the midst," as Luke informs us, but yet had no more that he could do, for he was obliged to come out without doing him any real or permanent bodily injury (*μηδὲν βλάψαι*). "It is much easier," says an old divine, "to keep him (Satan) out than to cast him out." And now heaven had acknowledged the Messiah; hell, as we have just seen, had to own him; while it remained for earth to confess its King.—J. J. G.

Vers. 29—34. Parallel passages: Matt. viii. 14—17; Luke iv. 38—41.—*The cure of Peter's wife's mother and others.* I. **FEVER OF A VIRULENT TYPE.** That St. Peter was a married man appears not only from this mention of his mother-in-law, but also from the reference of St. Paul (1 Cor. ix. 5), "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" But, near and dear as Peter was to the Saviour, he was not exempted from the common lot; his home was visited with sickness. Nor was it a mere slight indisposition. Fever of almost any type is a painful, wasting, and distressing malady. The present attack was one of no little severity, for St. Luke, a physician by profession, and so capable of accurate diagnosis, calls it a great or violent fever (*πυρετὴ μεγάλη*). "Anon they tell him of her." The persons who did so may have been Peter and Andrew, who had come to reside at Capernaum, and who, as St. Mark with his usual particularity here informs us, were joint-occupants of one house after they had removed from Bethsaida ("place of fishing"), their native place. Or it may have been the domestics; or rather, perhaps, the subject is left indeterminate. In any case, it was the right thing to do. At any time of sickness, and whatever be the nature of the disease, we should first go to God, then to the physician; first have recourse to prayer, then to the use of means. Similar in spirit is the injunction, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."

II. THE MODE OF CURE. The cure was another manifestation of Divine power, as

well as of human sympathy, on the part of our Lord. There are several graphic touches of a very interesting kind, especially in the description of the cure, by St. Mark. Our Lord approached the sufferer (*προσελθών*); St. Luke interjects the additional detail that he stood over her (*ἐπιστάς ἑαυτῷ*); he raised her up (*ἤγειρεν*); he took hold of her by the hand (*εἰσάρας τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῆς*). We cannot fail to be struck with the tenderness and compassion and sympathy of our blessed Lord with the poor sufferer. A word from him would have been quite as effectual. He did indeed rebuke the disease (*ἐπετίμησε*), but he did not stop there. Had he done so, there would have been apparently less of human interest, less of tender sensibility, and altogether less of that affectionate fellow-feeling that so touches the heart of suffering humanity.

III. THE EFFECTUAL NATURE OF THE CURE. It was immediate. He had no sooner taken her by the hand than the fever left her. The cure was miraculous; not that the disease was incurable, or past the power of ordinary physicians, but from the manner of the cure—a touch of the hand, and its immediacy: “Immediately the fever left her.” Still more, she was relieved of, or rather saved from, the prostration, often extreme, in consequence of fever. Her convalescence was instantaneous. No weary weeks of waiting for returning strength, no administering of restoratives to the exhausted frame, no slow or gradually perceptible increase of physical energy; at once, immediately, she arose and engaged in her usual routine of household duties.

IV. THE DUTY OF DEVOTING OUR RENEWED HEALTH AND RESTORED STRENGTH TO GOD’S SERVICE. She ministered unto them; that is, to Christ and his disciples. This is the great end and the sanctified use of affliction. When the visitation is removed, we are to employ ourselves with renewed zeal in the Divine service. We are to make some suitable return for the mercy experienced, and show our gratitude for the benefit bestowed. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies.”—J. J. G.

Vers. 32—39. Parallel passages: Matt. viii. 16, 17; iv. 23—25; Luke iv. 40—44.—*A Physician for both body and soul.* I. CURES OF DISEASED PERSONS AND DEMONIACS. 1. *The time specified.* It was now evening, and the sun had just set; and so the sabbath—for it was the sabbath day, as we know from ver. 21—was considered past. The people now felt at liberty, without encroaching on the sacred rest of that holy day, to bring their sick for healing. Another reason is assigned by some for delaying till evening, to the effect that the noontide heat was then over and the cool of evening come, and so the infirm could be brought with less risk and more convenience. *A motley group of invalids.* There was a general turn-out of the townspeople, so that the whole city seemed gathered together to the door of the dwelling, while they had brought with them all that were diseased and demoniac. What a motley multitude must have been there! The consumptive were there, with pale face or hectic flush; victims of incurable cancer were there; persons with the burning heat and the parched lips, or in the very delirium, of fever, were there; the palsied, the dropsical, the epileptic were there; patients having diseases of the heart, of the lungs, of the head, of the spine were there; the lame, the dumb, the blind, were there. Some were able to walk, some were on crutches, some were mounted on asses, and some carried on pallets by friends or neighbours. Demoniacs, too, were there, whether those whose souls were subject to demoniacal influence, like the “damsel possessed with a spirit of divination,” of whom we read in Acts xvi. 16; or those whose bodies were inhabited by evil spirits; or those, as was generally the case, whose souls and bodies were both under the fearful control of the evil one. 2. *The number cured.* “He healed many that were sick,” says St. Mark. Why not all? Theophylact answers the question by supposing that “he healed ‘many’ instead of ‘all,’ for the all were many;” but this would seem to require an article before πολλοὺς, and also one before κακῶς ἔχοντας, viz. the many that were diseased. Perhaps we may understand it of the limitation of time, that is to say, he healed all that there was time for, as it was already eventide when the process began; or perhaps we may suppose the restriction occasioned by the absence in some cases of the conditions of cure, just as we read of a certain place (ch. vi. 5) that “he could there do no mighty work.” The parallel passages of the other two synoptic Gospels seem to favour the first explanation, as in St. Matthew

we read that he "healed all that were sick," and in St. Luke that "he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them." 3. *Prohibition of demoniac testimony.* He had already rebuked an unclean spirit that volunteered his unwelcome testimony. He forbids their speaking at all, because they knew him—not as the margin has it, "to say that they knew him," which would require λέγειν instead of λαλεῖν—for one reason, lest he should appear to be in collusion with them, and lest countenance should thus be given to the calumny of the Pharisees, and also lest, if believed when happening to speak truly, they might be more readily credited when uttering the most fatal falsehoods. 4. *Origin and history of the name.* The history of the name *demons* is somewhat curious, and as follows:—*δαίμων*—derived from *δαιμόνιον*, skilful, and so implying superior knowledge, or from *δατο*, I dispense, as if able to distribute destinies, and so superior in power—was at first nearly synonymous with *θεός*, except that the latter signified a particular god or person; while the former meant rather a deity with respect to power; then an inferior deity, or semi-god, an agency intermediate between God and man; in plural, departed spirits of the good, and so tutelary deities or lares; next, any departed spirits or manes. In the New Testament the term signifies, not the spirits of the departed, but those evil spirits or fallen angels "who kept not their first estate," who are distinguished from the elect angels, and of whom we read that "God spared not the angels that sinned." They are subject to Satan, but, like him, they can only act by permission of God, and in their operations they can neither contravene the laws of nature nor interfere with human freedom and responsibility. Powerful for evil as they undoubtedly are, leading men captive or working on the children of disobedience, they, like their head, have only such power over man as men themselves consent to or concede them. Hence Augustine says truly, "Consentientes tenet, non invitos cogit." Further, the violation of the rule of neuters plural being constructed with verbs singular in ἡδεῖσθαι, comes under the first of the two following exceptions, that is, when neuters imply persons, as *ἄνθρωποι*, magistrates, and so individuality or plurality of persons is signified; or in case of inanimate objects, when individuality or plurality of parts is signified. 5. *Devotion of spirit.* To extraordinary diligence in business our Lord added singular devotion of spirit. After a fatiguing day in the synagogue, then with the sick who in such numbers resorted unto him, he at dawn of day next morning retires for secret devotion and spiritual communion with his heavenly Father. At daybreak, or "when it was day," as St. Luke expresses it, or more exactly, according to St. Mark, "early, while it was quite in the night" (*πρὶν ἔφυγον Ἄνα*)—at that early hour, intermediate between night and day, before the light of day has fully dawned or the darkness of the night quite departed—he withdrew to some lone and barren spot in one of the ravines or mountains, or under some sheltering rock in the district of Capernaum, to be alone with God. There he *continued* in prayer (*προσηύχετο*, imperfect). How beautifully our Lord instructs us by his practice as well as his precept to enter our closet and shut to the door, and pray to our Father in secret! He further shows us the necessity of prayer to maintain the life of the soul and obtain the help of heaven, to prepare us for our daily duties and for faithful diligence in the discharge of those duties. At the same time he commends the early morning for this exercise of devotion, when the feelings are fresh, the spirits in the fittest frame, and the mind free from the distractions so common in the after-part of the day. 6. *Interruption.* But, early as was our Lord's matin-hour, he was not secure from interruption. The people (*ὄχλοι*, crowds) sought him, as St. Luke informs us, while Peter and his companions, as St. Mark tells us, with characteristic impetuosity and affectionate eagerness pursued him—actually pursued him, as though he had fled away and escaped from them. The word *καρδιώζαν* is literally "hunted down" or "for;" that is, they pursued him closely, followed hard upon his tracks. But it is occasionally used in a good sense, as here; thus it is used in the Septuagint Version of Ps. xxiii. 6, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow (*καρδιώζουσι*) me."

II. *CIRCUIT THROUGH GALILEE.* 1. *Evangelistic tour.* Peter and those with him were evidently proud of their Master's great and increasing popularity, for when they had found him they tell him gladly, perhaps with somewhat of exaggeration, "All men seek for thee;" or, as in St. Luke, "were earnestly seeking (*ἐπιζητοῦν*) him, and tried to detain him (*κατέδωκαν*)." They evidently wished to keep to themselves or to the city of their habitation a monopoly of their Lord's services. But he, unmoved by praise.

uninfluenced by popularity, disabuses their minds of their narrowness in selfishly seeking to localize him in Capernaum, city though it was, calmly informing them of his purpose to itinerate throughout the villages or country towns of that then populous district. At once he puts his plan into execution, assuring them that the great object of his mission was not merely to plant the gospel in one spot or one solitary district, but to propagate it in all places, far off as well as near—"for therefore came I forth." This last expression is restricted by some to his coming out of the city of Capernaum, or out of the house, or out into the desert place, on the ground that, if the reference was to the general object of his mission, the verb would be simply *εἰλήλυθα*, not the compound which occurs here, or rather that *παρὰ*, or *ἀπὸ*, or *ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ*, would be employed, as in several passages of St. John's Gospel (e.g. viii. 42; xiii. 3; xvii. 8), to convey that meaning. The expression is, no doubt, somewhat indefinite, perhaps purposely indefinite, and so susceptible of either a more general or more specific sense; but by comparing the corresponding passage in St. Luke (i.e. "because unto this have I been sent") we are abut up to the larger and higher and inclusive sense. The whole of the sentence is more fully expressed by St. Luke, and is to the effect, "because to the rest of the cities also I must declare the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." Accordingly, in pursuance of his great object, he went forth "and came preaching into their synagogues, into the whole of Galilee, and casting out the demons," as the words (in the critical editions) are literally rendered. The number of such synagogues and the extent of the enterprise may be estimated from the statement of Josephus in relation to the great number of towns and villages with which Galilee was studded, and the exceeding populousness of the Galilean provinces in the days of our Lord. He writes ('Bel. Jud.' iii. 3, 2), "Moreover, the cities lie here very thick; and the very many villages there are here are everywhere so full of people, by the richness of their soil, that the very least of them contain about fifteen thousand inhabitants." 2. *An important variant.* We may not, however, dismiss this part of the subject without drawing attention to a very interesting and important various reading which, on the authority of codices N, B, C, L, Q, R, and of the Syriac and Coptic versions, substitutes *Ἰουδαίας* for *Γαλιλαίας*, as the Judean ministry of our Lord, which is, no doubt, assumed and implied by the synoptists, is nowhere else *expressly* mentioned by them.—J. J. G.

Vers. 40—45. Parallel passages: Matt. viii. 2—4; Luke v. 12—16.—*The cure of a leper.* I. THE DISEASE OF LEPROSY REPRESENTS THE DISEASE OF SIN. Of all the diseases that have found their way into this world in consequence of sin, and which have afflicted the human race, there is, perhaps, none more dreadful than that of leprosy. It was peculiar to Egypt, and native in that country, but passed into Palestine, and prevailed over Syria and Arabia also. It was common among the Jews, as we learn from several passages of Scripture, thus, in the Gospel according to St. Luke we read, "Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet." The Hebrew name *tsaraath* is from a root which means to strike, smite, also to roughen; and thus it may mean either a stroke or a rough swelling; while the English name of leprosy, coming from the Greek *λέπρα*, and that from *λέπις*, a scale, signifies "the scaly disease." The two sure signs of leprosy were the whitening (where it reached) of the usually dark hair of the Oriental, and the deepening of the disease below the skin. It was usually denominated *nega*, stroke, or *hannega*, the stroke or wound; this implied that it was directly inflicted by and immediately proceeded from the hand of God; it was also always considered as a punishment for sin. It need scarcely be added that it was a disease of the most virulent kind, and was a striking emblem of sin. 1. *It was hereditary; so with sin.* That leprosy was hereditary, we may infer from the punishment of Gehazi, concerning which it is written, "The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee and unto thy seed, for ever." So also we read of David's imprecation of leprosy on the descendants of Joab, on account of his murdering Abner, saying, "Let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue or is a leper." In like manner, the leprosy of sin has been inherited from the first parents of our race, and has continued hereditary throughout every succeeding generation. This remains true, whether we hold the doctrine of immediate and antecedent or mediate and consequent imputation in reference to the guilt of Adam's first sin; that is to say, whether we hold with the generality of the Reformed Churches that, in consequence of Adam having beer the

covenant head and representative of his descendants, the guilt or punishableness of his first sin was incurred by them, antecedently to their own actual transgressions, and that the corruption of their nature was the first part of that punishment—which is known as the doctrine of antenatal forfeiture; or whether we agree with Placæus and the New England root theory, which, denying the doctrine just stated, affirms that, while Adam was punished for his own sin, his descendants are not punishable for it, but derive from him corrupt natures by ordinary generation, and so, sinning after his example, are punished for their own sin, their progenitor's sin being thus punished "mediately through, and consequently to, their own sin in compliance with his example." Even this modified view refers the origin of man's sin to the natural descent from Adam, the organic root, so that, as the sap of a tree passes from the root along the trunk and through the branches and on to the smallest twigs, inherited corruption or derived inherent depravity is traceable, not as a penal consequence of Adam's sin, but a natural consequence of generation by or descent from him. Even on this low ground, according to which the imputation of Adam's first sin is denied, it is admitted that original sin is the inherent hereditary corruption of nature or depravity derived from Adam, just as leprosy, its sorrowful but striking symbol, was hereditary to the fourth generation at least. *An exceptional view*, it must be acknowledged, was held by Pelagius and his followers, who denied that man's moral character had suffered any injury from the Fall, or that men were born with less ability to do the will of God or discharge their duty to him than Adam; and by consequence denied the necessity of Divine grace or any special Divine agency, except indeed to enable men to perform more easily what they could accomplish, though less easily, without it, being thus capable of and by themselves of attaining to a perfectly holy life. Such doctrines, being evidently opposed to the whole scope and many plain statements of Scripture, were condemned by the Council of Ephesus, A.D. 431, having been vigorously combated and confuted by Augustine till his death in the preceding year, A.D. 430; and thenceforth they disappear till after the Reformation, when they were revived by the Socinians. But even the semi-Pelagians admitted original sin to the extent, at least, that man's moral nature is more or less corrupted by the Fall, and by consequence stands in need of special Divine assistance. Two facts in connection with the introduction of sin, or the entrance of moral evil, into our world are undeniable: one is the painful fact that the leprous taint of sin is found more or less on every human being; the other is equally unquestionable, namely, that man at his creation could not have had that taint, for a polluted creature could not have proceeded from the hands of a pure and holy God. The truth of revelation, then, remains unassailable, when it teaches that man, by disobedience to his Maker, introduced sin, and by sin destroyed himself. 2 *The leprosy was* (according to some authorities) *fearfully contagious; so is sin.* It has not only passed, as already intimated, by inheritance from generation to generation, but it passes by contagion from one individual to another individual, or to a number of individuals, for one sinner destroys much good. It spreads from family to family, from house to house, from one homestead to another, yea, from country to country; for "evil communications corrupt good manners." In its transmission through the generations from the Fall to the Flood, it propagated itself so rapidly, and spread so fast and so far that its violence became uncontrollable, and nothing could check or stay its virulence; the only remedy that remained was to sweep away and swallow up in the waters of the Deluge that race of moral invalids, tainted as they were with this inveterate and deadly distemper. And even the waters of the Flood were powerless to cleanse from this moral corruption, or to wash away the stain of this sin-leprosy. Again, soon after this great catastrophe the taint of this old leprosy exhibited unmistakable symptoms, breaking out afresh, and reappearing even in the head of that privileged family which the ark had saved; for Noah, we read, having planted a vineyard, "drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent." We are aware that the contagious nature of leprosy is disputed by some, but we prefer the view commonly held on the subject. 3. *Leprosy was small at its first appearance; so, too, is sin.* Leprosy commenced with a rising in the skin of the flesh, or a single bright spot. It was so small at the beginning as to be barely perceptible. A few specks or reddish spots on the skin were all that appeared at the outset. These spots became more numerous; they grew larger, bleaching the hairs that came in their way; they overspread the body, crusting it with

leprous scurf or shining scales; sores and swellings ensued. For a long time it seemed only cutaneous. But it did not stop with the skin; it penetrated deep down. It ate its way to the bones, it attacked the joints, it reached the marrow. The blood is corrupt, portions of the extremities mortify and drop off, a wasting away supervenes, till the poor leper, mutilated and disfigured, presents a shocking sight—a hideous spectacle, when dissolution at last brings him to a welcome grave. How dreadful was all this! And yet how like the leprosy of sin! It also is little in its beginnings, but it makes gradual, sometimes rapid, progress. No one has become entirely vile all at once. At the first appearance of the leprosy of sin in childhood, it is a mere spot—a small speck. The beginning may be some slight evasion of parental authority, some trifling act of disobedience; or it may be some small departure from strict truth; or it may be, perhaps, a petty act of pilfering, an insignificant instance of dishonesty; or it may be a little outburst of childish passion. It appears so small a matter that the indulgent parent or guardian overlooks it as unworthy of notice—at all events, undeserving of punishment; or the kind friend laughs at it as a mere childish trick. But oh! let it never be forgotten that that trifling disobedience, or small fib, or petty theft, or little ebullition of passion is the first breaking out of a spiritual leprosy—the first manifestation of the plague-spot of sin. And who can set limits or bounds to a seemingly small transgression, once it has been repeated and repeated until it has grown into a habit? Who can tell where that single sin will end? Who can check its onward progress? What can resist its downward sweep when, like the rushing of the roaring torrent, or with more than the impetuosity of the mighty waterfall, it overbears and overcomes all resistance, hurrying its hapless victim downward to perdition? 4. *Leprosy separated those afflicted with it from society; so does sin.* As might be reasonably expected, leprosy, from its loathsomeness, the ceremonial uncleanness which it produced, as well as its infectious nature (if rightly judged to be so), excluded from society and rendered its victims a terror to all who saw or met or came near them. Thus we read in Lev. xiii. 45, "The leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, *Tame, tame, Unclean, unclean.*" Here there are four unmistakable signs, which, when combined, served as a sufficient deterrent to any wayfarer or unwary person that might through ignorance or inadvertence approach the leprous person, and thereby catch infection, or at least contract ceremonial defilement. The bare head, with locks dishevelled; the garment rent from the neck to the waist; the beard, man's ornament, covered in token of grief;—were the ordinary signs of mourning for the dead or any great calamity; while the bandaged chin, and muffled lips uttering in doleful accents the melancholy cry, "Unclean, unclean!" was a warning which the most unwary passers-by were not likely to neglect at the time or ever after to forget. But it is further added, "He shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be." From other passages of the Word of God, we learn that they were not only separated from intercourse with others, but dwelt in a separate house, companied together, and were cut off entirely from the house of God. What a dreadfully deserted condition! Their nearest relatives shunned them, their dearest friends dreaded them, the tenderest ties were sundered by this loathsome disease of leprosy. Their touch was feared and fled from, for it was the touch of contagion; their company was shunned, for it imparted uncleanness and defilement; their very breath was dreaded as the pestilence, for it was the breath of disease and death. Here, in all this, is a sad symbol of sin. It separates between us and our God; it excludes us from his presence and privilege, from his friendship and family; it shuts us out from the society of his saints, from their benefits and blessedness; and, unless cleansed in God's own way, it will shut us out at last finally and for ever from his heavenly temple, for "without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." When King Uzziah became leprous in the house of the Lord, "the priests thrust him out from thence, yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him." If we could suppose the possibility of an unrenewed sinner being admitted into heaven—if for a moment we might suppose the occurrence of a thing impossible, for the unclean shall never enter there—would not the pure spirits of that upper sanctuary rush upon that unholy one with deepest indignation, thrusting him out at once from thence, and hurling him over the high battlements of heaven? Yea,

would not such a one himself, Uzziah-like, haste to get away from so pure a place, and to escape from such holy companionship? for heaven would not be heaven, and could not be heaven, to an unregenerate soul. How terrible the sinner's condition, shunned as he is by the saintly, dreaded as he is by the pure and holy, separated from fellowship and communion with God on earth, shut out from the enjoyment and glory of God in heaven, secluded from all that is holy and happy both here and hereafter, and last of all and worst of all, shut up with the spirits of the lost—shut up with the filthy, the fearful, the unbelieving and abominable; shut up with the devil and his angels; shut up with companions in misery, whose very companionship, apart altogether from "the worm that dieth not and the fire that is unquenchable," would be in itself a hell! 5. *Leprosy was incurable by human power; sin is so likewise.* The disease of leprosy, as we have seen, proceeded immediately from the hand of God, and so it was the hand of God alone that could remove it. No human power, no means that man might use, no medicines of any kind could avail aught, either for the relief or removal of this fatal malady. This will, perhaps, account for the circumstance of St. Matthew giving such prominence to our Lord's cure of the leper by recording that miracle first. The first miracle publicly performed by our Lord was the changing of water into wine, as we read, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee." But St. Matthew, writing immediately for the Jews, records this miracle of our Lord's curing the leprosy *first*: though not first in the order of time, he gives it the precedence notwithstanding, because it was best calculated to impress his countrymen with the possession by Jesus of Divine power, and so of a Divine commission, since it was their fixed belief that none but God could effect a cure. Hence the King of Israel said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" In like manner the miracle which St. Luke, writing for the Gentiles, records *first*, was the cure of a demoniac, which proved the power of Jesus over those demons or deities which the Gentiles worshipped. Hence, too, as may be observed in passing, it is that because the word *demon* was equivocal in its meaning among the Gentiles—sometimes denoting a good and sometimes an evil spirit—St. Luke restricts the meaning to the latter by the epithet "unclean" (*ἀκαθάρτου*); but St. Matthew never so employs it, and does not need to employ it, as the term had only the one sense of evil spirit among the Jews. Now, it is the same with the disease of sin. It never gets cured of itself; no mortal man can recover himself from it; no human being can restore the individual suffering from its pollution; no created power can heal this leprosy of the soul. God alone can deliver from this spiritual disease; the blood of Christ alone can cleanse from its defilement.

II. THE CLEANSING OF LEPROSY REPRESENTS THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN. There is a remarkable and instructive contrast between the cleansing of a leper, recorded in the Old Testament, and the cleansing of the leper mentioned in the Gospels. That contrast holds both between the respective applicants and the different means of cure adopted. Naaman's conduct—for his is the case referred to—presents a true picture of the natural heart proud and unhumiliated. Had he been commanded to do some great thing, he would have readily complied; but the process prescribed by the prophet was too simple, the mode of cure too easy, and Naaman too proud to descend to it. He became wroth, and went away. The leper in the passage before us is determined to dare or die; he defies the law of limitation which prohibited his approach or address to his fellow-men, and restricted him within certain bounds to prevent his contact with the living; thus, breaking through the *cordon sanitaire*, he makes his way to Jesus. Again, the prophet in the former case prescribed certain means, saying, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times." Here Jesus simply speaks the leper into health.

1. *The respectful application of the leper to our Lord.* This is clearly seen when we combine the expressions in the different narratives. St. Matthew states generally that he *worshipped* him (*προσκύνησεν*). The word employed, coming from a root which means to kiss, kiss the hand to, as a mark of respect and homage, conveys the idea of obeisance or reverence to one greatly superior. St. Mark further informs us that he *fell on his knees* to him (*γυνυμέσθω*); while from St. Luke we learn that, in his extremity and earnest entreaty, he *fell on his face* prostrate before him (*πρὸς τὸ ἐπὶ πρόσωπον*). With like humility, reverence, and earnestness must we come to Jesus. Like the leper, we must

come in humility, feeling that we are nothing and that Christ is all. We must come in earnest, feeling the desperate nature of our disease and our hopeless, perishing, and lost condition without him. The lepers of Samaria ventured at all hazards to fall into the host of the Syrians, "If they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die." We must also with like reverence and decision approach. It was an act of profound homage, as to a superior, on the part of the leper, not yet perhaps of worship in the higher sense as to a Divine being; but we, with superior knowledge of his claims, must acknowledge him as our Lord, worship him as our Messiah, bow in homage at his feet, and embrace him as our Saviour. Thus approaching him as lowly penitents, humble suppliants, and polluted transgressors, we, too, shall experience his power, and realize the preciousness of his salvation. 2. *The reception of the leper by our Lord.* St. Luke, with his customary medical exactness, tells us that this was a leper of no common kind, but one afflicted with the worst type of the disease, the sorest stage of it—he was full of leprosy (πλήρης λέπρας). St. Mark, again, makes us acquainted with our Lord's deep feeling of compassion for this poor sufferer (σπλαγχνισθὲς). "He stretched out his hand to him and touched him." By that touch he inspired the man with confidence, who believed in his power to cleanse, but doubted his willingness to risk contagion or ceremonial defilement; by that touch he proved himself "Lord of the Law," and exempt from its ritualistic restrictions; by that touch he broke through the ceremonialism which had usurped the place of true religion among the degenerate Jews of that time; by that touch, perhaps, he gave a sensible sign that healing virtue had already proceeded from him, and that the leper was virtually cleansed; by that touch he showed, as if by symbol, that he himself was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and yet remained unsoiled by sin. 3. *The response of our Lord to the application of the leper.* The application of the leper shows (1) the prevalent opinion about this malady, that it was not a mere disease, but a defilement; and therefore he speaks of *cleansing* (καθαίρειν) rather than cure. But (2) the application implies faith in the Saviour's power. He did not question the Saviour's ability, he only doubted his willingness to exercise that ability on his behalf. He did not say, "If thou canst," but "If thou wilt, thou canst." The form of conditional sentence by which the leper expresses his mind of the matter is that of probable contingency (ἐὰν with the subjunctive), and so not a mere supposition. This unquestioning faith in Christ's power was faith of no ordinary kind; it was faith in his power as something more than human. This leper was painfully conscious of his disease; he knew that the "finger of God" had touched him; he must have been convinced that no earthly power could cleanse or cure him, and therefore, when he confessed his belief in Jesus' power to effect it, he must have attributed to him vastly more than human potency—in a word, not less than power Divine. The term of address, Κύριε, is more than respect—it is belief in his Messiahship. True, he doubted the will; he feared, and no wonder, lest the foulness of his disease, its loathsomeness, its extremely disgusting nature, its thorough repulsiveness, might act as a deterrent, and prevent the much-desired relief. But no, Jesus meets him on his own ground; he responds to him in his own chosen terms; he employs in reply the very words. And thus, by his hand outstretched in kindness, by the touch of tenderness, by the look of compassion, and now by the words he uses, and the tone, perhaps, in which he utters them, he at once reassures the sufferer, and at once and for ever removes his suffering. The leper had said, "If thou wilt;" Jesus replies, "I will." The leper had said, "Thou canst cleanse me;" Jesus responds, "Be cleansed." He spake the word, and healed him; he gave the command, and the leper was cleansed. The scales fell off, the swellings subsided, the sores were healed, the unnatural whiteness gave place to the hue of health, his skin became fresh as that of a chubby child. The words of Ambrose (3) have been often repeated; they are worth remembering, and are as follows:—"Volo dicere propter Photinum; imperat propter Arium; tangit propter Manichæum;" "Photinus held Christ to be a mere man; Arius maintained his inequality with the Father; and Manichæus asserted he was only a phantom without human flesh. 4. *Relation of this to ourselves.* In coming to Christ we must (1) have faith in his power. All we can expect from an earthly physician is that, with his knowledge of the healing art, he will do the best he can; that he will exert his medical skill to the utmost; that he will leave no means or medicines unapplied. But, with all his skilfulness and integrity of purpose and

earnest desire to effect a cure, the appliances may be unavailing, the utmost exertions unsuccessful, and the disease may prove fatal. The soul's leprosy is beyond the power of any earthly physician; it baffles all human skill, and, if uncured, it ends in eternal death. We bless God there is one, though only one, Physician in heaven above or earth beneath that has power to cleanse and cure. In coming for cure we must (2) acknowledge our dependence on his sovereign will. We have no claim on him, nothing to recommend us to him, no merit to plead; we must refer all to his will, depend wholly on his mercy, trust his unlimited grace, cast ourselves at his feet, saying with the leper, "If thou wilt, thou canst." But (3) no one ever applied to him in this way whose application was in vain; no one ever came to him humbly and sincerely that was sent away uncured; no one ever came to him for cleansing that went unblest away. "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Once more, (4) while at the first we refer everything to the will of the Physician, we must ever after in everything yield obedience to that will and follow his directions, however mysterious or humbling they may be, whatever self-denial or self-sacrifice they may require. "See thou say nothing to any man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest;" such is the direction given to the leper, now cleansed and cured. It has been well said, in reference to our Lord sending the leper to the priest, that "though as *God* he had just showed himself *above* the Law, yet as *man* he came to *fulfil* the Law." But why command him "to say nothing to any man"? To teach the avoidance of boasting and of ambition to his followers, according to Chrysostom; lest the crowd, attracted by and astonished at his miracles merely, should not allow sufficient opportunity for teaching, according to Beza; lest the report of the miracle might outrun him, and the priest, through ill will or envy, refuse to pronounce him cleansed, according to Grotius and others; other reasons have been assigned, e.g. the avoidance of tumult and excitement, or the subordinate place of miracles in his ministry; it was rather to lose no time in conversation about the cure, but to regard it of prime importance and claiming first attention to get his cleansing attested by the priest and to prove his gratitude by works rather than words, presenting the offering enjoined in the Law recorded in Lev. xiv. 4—10. "The customary salutations were formal and tedious, as they are now, particularly among Druses and other non-Christian sects, and consumed much valuable time. . . . Another propensity an Oriental can scarcely resist, no matter how urgent his business, is, that if he meets an acquaintance, he must stop and make an endless number of inquiries, and answer as many." But (5) the testimony desired was official proof of the reality of the man's cleansing by the scrutiny and certificate of the priest; or it was to prove the Saviour's reverence for the Law; or perhaps even for a testimony against the people, because of unbelief in not acknowledging his Messiahship, notwithstanding all his mighty works.

LESSONS. 1. No bodily disease is one-millionth part so terrible in its ravages as sin, of which leprosy is such a special and striking type; none so dreadful in its results, or so destructive in its consequences. It darkens that spirit in man that once reflected so purely and perfectly the image of the Creator; it defiles the fountain-head of thought and feeling; it destroys the health and happiness of the soul. 2. Our Lord is able to deliver from this disease and save from sin. This miracle, as a sort of acted parable, plainly and impressively teaches this. He spake the omnific word that cleansed the leper though the exercise of his volition was all that was needed, for he had already touched him, to show, perhaps, that the foul disease was gone. He is as willing as he is able, he is as ready as he is powerful, his love being great as his power. He is more willing to heal than we are to seek and accept the blessing. 3. He is not only willing, but waiting to bestow on us present and immediate blessings. Present pardon and purity and peace, immediate grace and instant loving-kindness, instantaneous spiritual health, as well as future everlasting happiness, are among the boons which he stands waiting to confer. 4. Present application is our duty as well as our privilege. The present is his accepted time; he is willing to receive us now, he is waiting to cleanse us now, he is ready to bless us now. Present opportunities may not return, present impressions may be effaced and never renewed; his spirit will not always strive, his salvation will not be offered evermore.—J. J. G.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1.—The first sentence of this verse is better rendered thus: And when he entered again (εἰσελθὼν πάλιν) into Capernaum after some days; literally, *after days* (δι' ἡμερῶν). It is probable that a considerable interval had taken place since the events recorded in the former chapter. It was noised that he was in the house (ὅτι εἰς οἶκόν ἐστι); or, if the ὅτι be regarded as recitative, *it was noised, He is in the house, at home*, in his usual place of residence at Capernaum.

Ver. 2.—Many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them (ὥστε μηκέτι χωρεῖν), no, not even about the door. The description is very graphic. The house could not contain them, and even its courtyard and approaches were inconveniently thronged. This is one of the many examples of minute observation of details, so observable in St. Mark's Gospel. And he preached (ἐλάλει)—more literally, *was speaking*—the word unto them. This little sentence indicates the great object of his ministry. The exercise of miraculous power was subordinated to this; the miracles being simply designed to fix the attention upon the Teacher as One sent from God.

Vers. 3, 4.—And they come, bringing unto him a man sick of the palsy, borne of four. Here again the minuteness of detail is very observable. It is also interesting to notice how the three writers of the synoptic Gospels supplement and illustrate one another. St. Matthew gives the outline, St. Mark and St. Luke fill up the picture. St. Luke (v. 18) tells us how they sought means to bring the paralytic into Christ's presence. They carried him on his bed up the flight of steps outside the house, and reaching to the roof; and then both St. Mark and St. Luke tell us how, having first removed a portion of the tiling and broken up the roof, they then let him down through the opening thus made into the midst before Jesus. The chamber into which he was thus abruptly lowered was most probably what is elsewhere called the "upper chamber," a large central room, convenient for the purpose of addressing both those who filled it and also the crowd that thronged the outer court below.

Ver. 5.—Son, thy sins be forgiven thee; literally, *thy sins are forgiven*. The word "son" is in the Greek the more endearing word (τέκνον) "child." St. Luke uses the word "man." St. Matthew adds the words "Be of good cheer." It is here to be carefully observed that the spiritual gift, the gift of forgiveness, is first conveyed; and

we must also notice the authoritative character of the address, "Thy sins are forgiven." Bede observes here that our Lord first forgives his sins, that he might show him that his suffering was ultimately due to sin. Bede also says that he was borne of four, to show that a man is carried onwards by four graces to the assured hope of healing, namely, by prudence, and courage, and righteousness, and temperance. Jesus seeing their faith. Some of the Fathers, as Jerome and Ambrose, think that this faith was in the bearers of the sick man, and in them only. But there is nothing in the words to limit them in this way. Indeed, it would seem far more natural to suppose that the paralytic must have been a consenting party. He must have approved of all that they did, otherwise we can hardly suppose that it would have been done. We may therefore more reasonably conclude, with St. Chrysostom, that it was alike their faith and his that our Lord crowned with his blessing. *Thy sins are forgiven*. These words of our Lord were not a mere wish only; they were this sick man's sentence of absolution. They were far more than the word of absolution which Christ's ambassadors are authorized to deliver to all those who "truly repent and unfeignedly believe." For Christ could read the heart, which they cannot do. And therefore his sentence is absolute, and not conditional only. It is not the announcement of a qualified gift, but the assertion of an undoubted fact. In his own name, and by his own inherent power, he there and then forgives the man his sins.

Vers. 6, 7.—The words, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? in accordance with the altered reading (βλασφημεῖ for βλασφημῶν), should stand thus: *Why doth this man thus speak? he blasphemeth*. It is evident that the scribes, who were secretly amongst themselves finding fault with our Lord's words, understood that, by the use of these words, our Lord was assuming to himself a Divine attribute. And if he had been a mere man; if he had not really been, as he assumed to be, Divine, the only begotten Son of the Father,—then no doubt they would have been right in supposing that he blasphemed. But their error was that they could not perceive in him the glory of the only begotten Son. The light was shining in the darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not.

Vers. 8—11.—It does not clearly appear whether these murmurers communicated their thoughts audibly to one another. At all events, their words were evidently not

heard beyond themselves. But Jesus perceived in his spirit their reasonings. He knew their thoughts, not by communication from another, as the prophets of old had things made known to them by revelation, but by his own Spirit pervading and penetrating all things. From this the Christian Fathers, against the Arians, infer the divinity of Christ, that he inspected the heart, which it is the prerogative of God alone to do. St. Chrysostom says, "Behold the evidences of the divinity of Christ. Observe that he knows the very secrets of your heart." Nor did Christ only perceive their thoughts. He perceived also the direction in which these thoughts were moving. Their feeling was no doubt this: "It is an easy thing to claim the power of forgiving sin, since this is a power which cannot be challenged by any outward sign." Now, it is to this form of unbelief that the next words of our Lord are the answer. It is as though he said, "You accuse me of blasphemy. You say that I am usurping the attributes of God when I claim the power of forgiving sin. You ask for the evidence that I really possess this power; and you say it is an easy thing to lay claim to a power which penetrates the spiritual world, and which is therefore beyond the reach of material proof. Be it so. I will now furnish that evidence. I will prove, by what I am now about to work upon the body, that what I have just said is effectual upon the spirit. I have just said to this paralytic, 'Thy sins are forgiven.' You challenge this power; you question my authority. I will now give you outward and sensible evidence that this is no fictitious or imaginary claim. You see this poor helpless, palsied man. I will say to him in presence of you all, 'Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house.' And if simply at my bidding his nerves are braced, and his limbs gather strength, and he rises and walks, then judge ye whether I have a right to say to him, 'Thy sins are forgiven.' Thus, by doing that which is capable of proof, I will vindicate my power to do that which is beyond the reach of sensible evidence; and I will make manifest to you, by these visible tides of my grace, in what direction the deep under-current of my love is moving." (See Trench on the Miracles, p. 205.)

Ver. 12.—The words are spoken, and the paralytic arose, and straightway took up the bed (*ἥρπσεν, καὶ εὐθὺς ἔσπας*)—such is the most approved reading—and went forth before them all. There is a spiritual application of this miracle which it is well to notice. The paralytic lifting up himself is a figure of him who, in the strength of Christ, has lifted himself up from the lethargy

of sin. He has first applied to Christ, perhaps by his own sense of his need, perhaps with the help of others. He may have had difficulty in approaching him. A multitude of sinful thoughts and cares may have thronged the door. But at length, whether alone or with the kind assistance of faithful friends, he has been brought to the feet of Jesus, and has heard those words of love and power, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." And then he will rise and walk. He will take up that whereon he lay. He will carry away those things whereon he has hitherto found satisfaction—his love of ease, his self-indulgence. His bed, whatever it may have been whereon he lay, becomes the proof of his cure. When the intemperate man becomes sober, the passionate man gentle, and the covetous man liberal, he takes up that whereon he lay. Thus does each penitent man begin a new life; setting forward with new hopes and new powers towards his true home, eternal in the heavens.

We are not informed of the effect of this miracle upon the scribes and Pharisees. But it is too evident that, though they could not deny the fact, they would not acknowledge the power; while the mass of the people, more free from prejudice, and therefore more open to conviction, united in giving glory to God. Faith in Christ as sent by God was in fact increasing amongst the mass of the people; while unbelief was working its deadly result of envy and malice amongst those who ought to have been their guides and instructors.

Vers. 13, 14.—It is probable that our Lord remained some time at Capernaum before he went forth again. The word "again" refers to his former going forth (see ch. i. 35). When he went forth on this occasion he appears to have travelled southwards along the sea-shore. There, not far from Capernaum, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of custom (*ἐν τῷ τελωνίῳ*); more literally, at the place of toll. This place would be in the direct line for traders from Damascus to Accho, and a convenient spot for the receipt of the duties on the shipping. It is observable that in St. Matthew's own Gospel (ix. 9) he describes himself as "a man named Matthew." St. Luke, like St. Mark, calls him Levi. The same person is no doubt meant. It is most likely that his original name was Levi, and that upon his call to be an apostle he received a new name, that of Matthew, or Mattathias, which, according to Gesenius, means "the gift of Jehovah." In his own Gospel he names himself Matthew, that he might proclaim the kindness and love of Christ towards him, in the spirit of St. Paul, where he says, "Christ Jesus

came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. i. 15). Follow me; me, that is, whom you have already heard preaching the gospel of the kingdom in Capernaum, and confirming it by many miracles, and especially by that conspicuous miracle spoken of by all, the healing of the paralytic. St. Chrysostom says that "our Lord called Matthew, who was already constrained by the report of his miracles." The condescension of Christ is shown in this, that he called Matthew the "publican," who on that account was odious to the Jews, not only to be a partaker of his grace, but to be one of his chosen followers, a friend, an apostle, and an evangelist.

It has been urged against the truth of Christianity, by Porphyry and others, that the first disciples followed Christ blindly, as though they would have followed without reason any one who called them. But they were not men who acted upon mere impulse and without reason. The miracles, no doubt, produced an impression upon them. And then we may reasonably suppose that their moral faculties perceived the majesty of Deity shining through the countenance of the Son of God. As the magnet attracts the iron, so Christ drew Matthew and others to himself; and by this attractive power he communicated his graces and virtues to them, such as an ardent love of God, contempt of the world, and burning zeal for the salvation of souls.

Ver. 15.—And it came to pass—*ἐγένετο* seems the best reading—as he was sitting at meat in his house. This was the house of Matthew. St. Matthew (ix. 10) modestly says, "in the house," keeping himself as much as possible in the background. St. Luke, with greater fulness, says (v. 29) that "Levi made him a great feast in his house." From this it appears that Matthew at once marked the occasion of his call by inviting his associates, publicans and sinners, that they too, being won by the example and teaching of Christ, might be led in like manner to follow him. Good is ever diffusive of itself; and Christian love prompts those who have experienced the love of Christ to draw others to the same fountain of mercy. We find publicans and sinners constantly associated together; for, although there is nothing necessarily unlawful in the office of a tax-gatherer, yet, since men frequently followed that calling because it offered the opportunity for fraud and extortion, hence the "publicans" were, generally speaking, odious to the Jews, and regarded as nothing better than "sinners." Moreover the Jews of old maintained that they were Abraham's seed, and protested that as a people dedicated to God, they ought not to be subject to the Romans, who were

Gentiles and idolaters. They considered that it was contrary to the liberty and dignity of the children of God that they should pay tribute to them, a view which increased their prejudice against the tax-gatherers. And indeed this was one main cause of the rebellion of the Jews, which led finally to their overthrow by Titus and Vespasian.

Ver. 16.—According to the most approved readings, this verse should run thus: And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with the sinners and publicans, said unto his disciples, He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners. The words "publicans and sinners" are thus inverted in their order in the two clauses, as though they were convertible terms. Of course, the scribes and Pharisees had not sat down at this feast, but some of them had probably found their way into the chamber in which the feast was going on, where they would comment freely upon what they saw, and condemn our Lord's conduct as inconsistent with his character. It is as though they said, "By this conduct he transgresses the Law of God and the traditions of the elders. Why, then, do you follow him?"

Ver. 17.—Jesus heard their murmurings, and his answer was, They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. As the physician is not infected by the disease of the patient, but rather overcomes it and drives it from him, so it is no disgrace but rather an honour to the physician to associate himself with the sick, and so much the more, the greater the sickness. So that it is as though Christ said, "I who am sent from heaven by the Father, that I might be the Physician of the souls of sinners, am not defiled by their sins and spiritual diseases when I converse with them; but rather I cure and heal them, which is alike for my glory and for their good, and so much the more, the greater their sins. For I am the physician of sinners, not their companion. But you, O scribes and Pharisees, are not the physicians but the companions of sinners, and so you are contaminated. Nevertheless, you desire to be thought righteous and holy; and therefore I do not associate with you, (1) because the whole, such as you think yourselves to be, need not the spiritual Physician; and (2) because your insincerity and hypocrisy are an offence to me."

Ver. 18.—The first sentence of this verse should be rendered thus: And the disciples of John and the Pharisees were fasting (*ἦσαν νηστεύοντες*). In all the synoptic Gospels we find this incident following closely upon what goes before. It is not improbable that the Pharisees and the disciples of John

were fasting at the very time when Matthew gave his feast. This was not one of the fasts prescribed by the Law; had it been so, it would have been observed by our Lord. There were, however, fasts observed by the Pharisees which were not required by the Law; there were two in particular of a voluntary nature, mentioned by the Pharisee (Luke xviii. 12), where he says, "I fast twice in the week." It was a custom, observed by the stricter Pharisees, but not of legal obligation. It was not correct to say, but thy disciples fast not. They fasted, no doubt, but in a different spirit; they did not fast to be seen of men—they followed the higher teaching of their Master. It is remarkable to find the disciples of John here associated with the Pharisees. John was now in prison in the fort of Machærus. It is possible that jealousy of the increasing influence of Christ may have led John's disciples to associate themselves with the Pharisees. The point of this particular attack upon Christ was this: It is as though they said, "You claim to be a new teacher sent from God, a teacher of a more perfect religion. How is it, then, that we are fasting, while your disciples are eating and drinking?" The disciples of John more especially may have urged this out of zeal for their master. Such an unworthy zeal is too often seen in good men, who love to prefer their own leader to all others, forgetting the remonstrance of St. Paul, "While there is amongst you strife and contention, are ye not carnal, and walk after the manner of men?"

Ver. 19.—The Bridegroom here is Christ, because he espoused the human nature, and, through it, the Church to himself in his holy incarnation. This holy union he began by his grace on earth, and he will consummate it gloriously with his elect in heaven, when "the marriage of the Lamb shall have come, and his wife shall have made herself ready." Hence John the Baptist calls himself the friend of the Bridegroom, that is, of Christ. The sons (*vioi*) of the bridechamber are the special friends of the Bridegroom, those who are admitted into the closest fellowship with him. The expression is a Hebraism, like "the children of disobedience," and many other similar forms of expression. So long, then, as the bridegroom is with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast. It is as though our Lord said, "It is not surprising that they should not care to fast as long as they enjoy my presence; but when I am taken from them, then shall they fast."

Ver. 20.—This is the first occasion on which our Lord alludes to his removal from

them. The bridegroom shall be taken away from them. The Greek word (*ἀπαρθῆ*) conveys the idea of a painful severance. And then will they fast in that day (*ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ*). This is the true reading. After our Lord's death, his disciples frequently fasted as of necessity, and went through much privation and trial. And so it must be for the most part with all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, until he returns to take to himself his kingdom, when there will be a glad and everlasting festival.

Ver. 21.—No man seweth a piece of new cloth—the Greek is (*ὅσους ἀγνῶσθαι*) *undressed* cloth, cloth newly woven, and before it has been dressed by the fuller—on an old garment. The latter part of this verse is better rendered, as in the Revised Version, thus: Else that which should fill it up taketh from it, the new from the old; and a worse rent is made. The meaning of the words is this: An old garment, if it be torn, should be mended by a patch of old material; for if a patch of new material is used, its strength or fulness takes away from the old garment to which it is sewn; the old and the new do not agree, the new drags the old and tears it, and so a worse rent is made.

Ver. 22.—"Bottles" in this verse is better rendered literally *wine-skins* (*ἀσκοὺς*). And no man putteth new wine (*οἶνον νέον*) into old wine-skins; else the new wine will burst the skins, and the wine perisheth, and the skins; but they put new wine into fresh wine-skins (*ἀσκοὺς καινοὺς*). The sense is this: New wine, in the process of fermentation, will burst old bottles made of wine-skins not strong enough to resist the strength of the fermenting fluid; so that there is a twofold loss—both that of the bottles and that of the wine. And therefore new wine must be poured into bottles made of fresh wine-skins, which, by reason of their strength and toughness, shall be able to resist the fermenting energy of the new wine. And by these very apt illustrations our Lord teaches us that it is a vain thing to attempt to mingle together the spiritual freedom of the gospel with the old ceremonies of the Law. To attempt to engraft the living spiritual energy of the gospel upon the old legal ceremonial now about to pass away, would be as fatal a thing as to piece an old garment with new material, or to put new wine into old wine-skins. There is here, therefore, a valuable lesson for the Christian Church, namely, to treat new converts with gentleness and consideration.

Ver. 23.—If there is a rapid sequence in this part of the narrative, the fasting referred to in the last verses may have taken place the day before. St. Luke (vi. 1) here

adds to St. Mark's account the words, "and did eat, rubbing them [that is, the ears of corn] in their hands;" an incidental evidence of a simple life, that they did not here eat prepared food, but the simple grains of wheat, which they separated from the chaff by rubbing the ears of corn in their hands. This passage marks with some nicety the time of the year. The corn in that district would be ripening about May. It would, therefore, be not long after the Passover. The difficult expression in St. Luke vi. 1, ἐν σαββάτῳ δευτεροπρώτῳ, and which is rendered in the Authorized Version "on the second sabbath after the first," is reduced by the Revisers of 1881 to the simple phrase (ἐν σαββάτῳ), "on a sabbath," there not being sufficient evidence to persuade them to retain the word δευτεροπρώτῳ. But other evidences seem to show that the incident occurred earlier than as recorded by St. Matthew. The Fathers are fond of spiritual applications of this rubbing of the ears of corn. Bede, in remarking upon the fact of the disciples plucking the ears of corn, and rubbing them until they get rid of the husks, and obtain the food itself, says that they do this who meditate upon the Holy Scriptures, and digest them, until they find in them the kernel, the quintessence of delight; and St. Augustine blames those who merely please themselves with the flowers of Holy Scripture, but do not rub out the grain by meditation, until they obtain the real nourishment of virtue.

Ver. 24.—That which is not lawful. The supposed unlawfulness was not the plucking of the ears of corn with the hand, which was expressly permitted by the Law (Deut. xxiii. 25), but the plucking and eating on the sabbath day.

Vers. 25, 26.—David . . . and they that were with him. This seems opposed to what we read in 1 Sam. xxi., where David is stated to have been alone. But the facts appear to have been these, that David, fleeing from Saul, went alone to Ahimelech the high priest, and sought and obtained five loaves of the "shewbread," which he carried away with him to his companions in flight, and shared with them; for he says (1 Sam. xxi. 2), "I have appointed my servants to such and such a place." This incident actually happened in the high priesthood of Ahimelech the father of Abiathar. Bede says that they were both present when David came in his distress and obtained the shewbread. But Ahimelech having been slain, together with eighty-six priests, by Saul, Abiathar fled to David, and became his companion in his exile. Moreover, when he succeeded to the high priesthood on the death of Ahimelech, he did far more good service than his father had done, and so was

worthy of being spoken of with this special commendation, and as though he was actually high priest, even though his father was then living. The words may properly mean "in the days when Abiathar was living who became high priest, and was more eminent than his father." The shewbread; literally, *the bread of the face*, that is, *of the Divine presence*, symbolizing the Divine Being who is the Bread of life. It was directed by the Law that within the sanctuary there should be a table of shittim (or acacia) wood; and every sabbath twelve newly baked loaves were placed upon it in two rows. These loaves were sprinkled with incense, and then remained there until the following sabbath. They were then replaced by twelve newly baked loaves, the old loaves being eaten by the priests in the holy place, from which it was unlawful to remove them. These twelve loaves corresponded to the twelve tribes. The force of our Lord's reasoning is this: David, a man after God's own heart, when sorely pressed by hunger, applied to the high priest and took some of these sacred loaves, loaves which under ordinary circumstances it was not lawful for the lay people to eat, because he wisely judged that a positive law, forbidding the laity to eat this bread, ought to yield to a law of necessity and of nature; which intimates to us that in a grave necessity of famine, life may be lawfully preserved by eating even sacred bread which has been dedicated to God. Therefore, in like manner, nay, much more, was it lawful for Christ and his disciples to pluck the ears of corn on the sabbath day, that by rubbing them in their hands they might pick out the good grain and satisfy their hunger.

Ver. 27.—The sabbath was instituted for the benefit of man, that he might refresh and renew his body, fatigued and worn by six days' labour, with the restful calm of the seventh; and that he might have leisure to apply his mind to the things which concern his everlasting salvation; to consider and meditate upon the Law of God; and rouse himself, by the remembrance of the Divine greatness and goodness, to true repentance, to gratitude, and to love. The force of the argument is this: The sabbath was made on account of man, not man on account of the sabbath. The sabbath, great and important as that institution is, is subordinate to man. If, then, the absolute rest of the sabbath becomes hurtful to man, a new departure must be taken, and some amount of labour must be undergone, that man may be benefited. Therefore was Christ justified in permitting to his disciples a little labour in plucking these ears of corn on the sabbath day, in order that they may appease their hunger. For it is better that the rest of the sabbath

should be disturbed, though but a little, than that any one of those for whose sake the sabbath was instituted should perish.

Ver. 28.—Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath. "The sabbath was made for man." It is the inferior institution, man being the higher, for whose sake the sabbath was appointed. But the Son of man is Lord of all men, and of all things that pertain to man's salvation; therefore he must of necessity be Lord even of the sabbath; so that when he sees fit he can relax or dispense with its obligations. It is true

that for us Christians the first day of the week, the Lord's day, has taken the place of the ancient Jewish sabbath; but the principle here laid down by our Lord is applicable to the "first" day no less than to the "seventh;" and it teaches us that our own moral and religious advancement and that of our brethren is the object which we should all aim at in the manner of our observance of the Christian Sunday; while we strive to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—12.—*Christ's authority to pardon.* Our Lord's miracles of healing were, upon the surface and obviously, designed to relieve from suffering and to restore to health. They, at the same time, directed the attention of both those benefited, and of spectators, to the supernatural power and to the benevolence of the Divine Physician. But no Christian can fail to see in them a moral significance. Disorders of the body were symbolical of spiritual disease. And the great Healer, who pitied and relieved physical suffering, nevertheless had regard to the more serious affections of the soul, and designed by his works of healing to direct attention to himself, to excite faith in himself, as able and willing to save sinners. It was in the miracle recorded in the passage before us that the Saviour first openly avowed the spiritual purpose of his ministry and the spiritual authority he possessed to pardon and to save.

I. THE CASE IN WHICH THIS AUTHORITY WAS EXERCISED. A paralytic is in a condition both helpless and hopeless. Deprived by the disease of the command of his limbs, his case is one beyond the power of medical skill to deal with. This palsy may, therefore, be regarded as symbolical of the sinner's pitiable condition and gloomy prospects. With regard to the paralytic's state of mind, we are to presume that he was sensible of his sinfulness and of his need of pardon and acceptance; otherwise our Lord could never have treated him as he did. To the sufferer, his bodily malady was indeed afflictive; but he must have had such a "conscience of sin" as to regard his spiritual disorder as more oppressive and more pitiable still. The case, then, in which the Lord Jesus will exercise his prerogative of pardon, is the case of the sinner whose sin is a felt burden, and who brings that burden to the Divine Saviour.

II. THE CONDITIONS PRESENT WHEN CHRIST THUS EXERCISED HIS AUTHORITY TO PARDON. There was a general interest and appreciation in the community; multitudes crowded to hear the Master's words, and many applicants were urgently seeking his healing mercy. There were sentiments of pity and kindness on the part of the sufferer's friends, leading to practical interposition on his behalf. What these friends could do, they did; they brought the sufferer to Christ. There was faith, both in the paralytic and in his friends—faith, which took a practical form in the approach to Jesus, in the conjoined effort to bring the sufferer beneath the notice of the Healer, and especially in the perseverance so ingeniously and strikingly displayed. All these were conditions which the Saviour evidently regarded as peculiarly favourable to the public exercise of his prerogative to pardon.

III. THE AUTHORITATIVE MANNER AND LANGUAGE IN WHICH THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON WAS GIVEN. There was no inquiry into the state of the paralytic's mind; for Jesus knew what was in man, and needed not to be told. There was no assertion of a delegated power; for the Son of man had authority on earth to forgive sins. There was no hesitation, or delay, or qualification. Nor was Christ's language a mere statement that the sins of the paralytic were forgiven; it was an actual pardon and absolution—nothing less. When Christ forgives, he forgives freely, fully, absolutely. He came to "save his people from their sins." He retains the same power still, and exercises it from the throne of his glory.

IV. THE SUPPORT AND VINDICATION OF SPIRITUAL BY MIRACULOUS AUTHORITY. We

can hardly wonder at the captious spirit in which Christ's claim was received, at the cavillings of unbelief. Unless they believed the speaker to be more than a prophet, more than human, they must have stumbled at his words. Their general principle was correct and sound: "Who can forgive sins, but God only?" What was passing in their minds was, in the circumstances, natural enough. "It is easy to say, 'Thy sins are forgiven;' but what assurance have we that the words are anything beyond words? This is ground upon which the speaker cannot be refuted, and yet upon which the hearers cannot be convinced." These reflections, which were passing in the minds of the scribes, were known to Christ. There was only one way of meeting the objection, of overcoming the difficulty. Jesus must descend to common ground, and appeal to the senses and the understanding of the bystanders. He accordingly wrought a miracle in support of his claims. In doing this, he both relieved the sufferer and vindicated his own authority in the spiritual realm. He bade the paralytic arise, take up his couch, and return home, sound and well.

V. THE EFFECT PRODUCED BY THIS TWOFOLD EXERCISE OF POWER. The *patient* was at once pardoned and cured. With rejoicing heart, with restored powers of limb, he arose and departed to his house, free from burden of guilt, and free from the pains and infirmities of disease. The *scribes* were silenced; some may have been convinced, and few could have been unimpressed. The *witnesses* of the miracle were amazed at this exhibition of twofold authority by the Lord of nature and of spirits. They are recorded to have received the lessons aright; for they glorified God as the Author of healing and salvation in the person of his Son, and they recognized the unique authority entrusted to One human in form, in feeling, and in voice, but of authority supernatural, beneficent, Divine!

APPLICATION. 1. The sinner may learn from this narrative in what manner, and in what spirit, to come to Jesus. 2. And he may be encouraged by the representation here given of Christ's willingness and authority to save.

Vers. 13—17.—*Levi's discipleship and hospitality.* The story of Matthew illustrates the part of improbabilities in human life. Some would see in it the irony of fate; we would recognize the mystery of Providence. The evangelists tell us of a man who occupied the humble and even despised position of collector of Roman dues or customs by the shores of the little Lake of Gennesaret, who was summoned to leave this lowly occupation, for what seemed the yet humbler office of attendant and scholar to a peasant Teacher, but who, in course of time, became the chronicler of his Master's life and teachings, and thus the writer of a treatise which stands first in the New Testament—a volume which has been more widely circulated and read than any other composition in any language spoken by man! Looking back upon the call of Matthew, we can see in it an importance which none of the bystanders could possibly have surmised. The narrative yields instructive lessons, whether we consider the conduct of Levi himself, or study the action and the very memorable language used on this occasion by our Lord.

I. Taking first THE CONDUCT OF THIS TOLL-TAKER or tax-gatherer of Gennesaret, we remark in him an instance of: 1. *A man forsaking a lucrative occupation in order to follow Christ.* Matthew had no doubt found time, amidst his many and exacting avocations, to resort to the Saviour's society and to listen to his public teaching. In this he furnishes us with an example of the effort and the self-denial which business men may find to be profitable to them, if they will, at some loss of time and gain, take advantage of opportunities of Christian fellowship and instruction. And when the time and the call came, the same spirit of self-sacrifice led this devout man to relinquish his secular occupation and emoluments, and to attend upon the Prophet of Nazareth, to learn his mind and to qualify for his service. Are none such called to a similar surrender to-day? See also: 2. *A man using his social influence to bring his companions under the teaching of the Saviour.* The feast to which Matthew invited his old associates was not merely complimentary or convivial. There can be no question that he was actuated by a high motive in inviting people of this class to meet Jesus. Probably it was the best, possibly it was the only, way in which this peculiar class could be brought into contact with the great Teacher. How well it is that those who have the means of doing so should use their hospitality for benevolent and truly Christian purposes—

should bring together those who need and those who are prepared to impart some spiritual blessing, and should thus instrumentally bring together the sinner and the Saviour!

II. But we have here also lessons derivable from THE CONDUCT OF CHRIST. 1. *Christ's disregard and defiance of public opinion.* This is evident (1) in *his selection of disciples and apostles.* He not only chose the lowly and the obscure; he, in this instance especially, chose the despised. The collectors of the Roman revenue were, among the Jews, the mark of general obloquy and contempt. The Son of man, who himself came from the despised Nazareth, selected his friends from the mean and unlettered; and in the case of Matthew he took a man from a sordid and repulsive calling to be an apostle of the greatest religion of the world. It is the wont of Divine wisdom to use "things which are not to bring to nought things which are." (2) *In his companionship and social intercourse.* That Jesus should eat and drink with publicans and sinners excited the surprise and the hatred of the "scribes of the Pharisees," who accounted the common people as accursed. But the rule of Jesus was to go where he could do the Father's will, and pluck men as brands from the burning. It is not well to be a "companion of fools," yet there are occasions upon which the mature and established Christian will do well to seek the society of the ignorant and debased, with the view of instructing and elevating them by the gospel of salvation. 2. *Christ's vindication of this disregard and defiance.* He had a reason for acting as he did. (1) *Jesus recognized men's spiritual need.* To the scribes, the guests at Levi's house were simply contemptible sinners, but to the holy Lord they were the spiritually sick; he saw upon them the marks of a dire disorder, the promise of approaching death. This is the just and Divine light in which to look at the misled and erring children of men. When we regard them thus, not contempt, but pity, will fill our hearts. (2) *Jesus asserted his own power to heal and save and bless.* He was the Divine Physician, in whom alone is help and hope for man. Bad as was the case of the "sinners," it was not beyond the power of his skill and kindness. He had purposes of mercy and power to save. And from the ranks of the sinners Jesus won over many to be soldiers of righteousness; from the pest-houses of the plague-stricken he drew forth many who, restored to spiritual health, became in turn amongst their sinful fellow-men, "ministers to minds diseased."

APPLICATION. 1. Let preachers and teachers of the gospel regard none as so base in condition, or so depraved in character, as to be beyond the power of Christ to save. 2. Let those who are humbled beneath a sense of sin and ill desert be encouraged to come to Jesus, who will both welcome them into his presence, and confer upon them all the priceless blessings of salvation and of eternal life.

Vers. 18—22.—*Christianity and asceticism.* Strange as it seems, it is unquestionable that the very humanity of Jesus, his truly broad and human sympathies, were an offence to the religious leaders of his time. The Pharisees fasted oft; John came neither eating nor drinking; Jesus, who came that he might live among men and who associated with them in all their innocent occupations and enjoyments, excited the displeasure and malice of those who were too superficial and ceremonial to understand his large-heartedness and spirituality. Accordingly, when our Lord joined the festive party at Levi's house, there arose questionings which issued in the explanations given in this passage of the relation between the old religion and its asceticism, and the new religion and its cheerfulness and Divine breadth.

I. A PERSONAL AND TEMPORARY REASON why the disciples of Jesus should not be ascetic. Like a true Leader and Master, Jesus defends his followers, whereinaever their conduct admits of defence. The figure which he employs is one which John had already used, designating his Divine successor the Bridegroom who should possess the bride. The true ground of Christian joy is, in this passage, figuratively but beautifully explained. The Jewish wedding was an occasion for festivity, rejoicing, music, and society. The companions of the bridegroom—"children of the bride-chamber"—were his choicest and most trusted and beloved friends. They were happy in their friend's society, and rejoiced with him in his joy, and took a prominent part in the festivities appropriate to the occasion. The Lord Jesus honours his disciples by describing them as sustaining such a relationship to him, the Divine Bridegroom.

Whilst he was with them, how could they be sad? how could they fast? how could they refrain from holy mirth and pious songs? There is no ground of joy so just, so sacred, as the friendship of Jesus. To have him with us always, to hear his voice, to be assured of his interest and love,—this is the purest satisfaction and the highest gladness known to human hearts. “I have,” says he to his own—“I have called you friends.” “Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” Christ’s defence, then, is, that at the time and in the circumstances a joyful spirit was natural and blameless in his companions and disciples. And this was evidently, at this period at all events, the case. To the reader of the Gospels (although M. Renan has, no doubt, exaggerated the facts), it is clear that, in their earlier “progresses” through Galilee, our Lord and his followers led a cheerful, bright, and joyous existence. Time enough to mourn when their Lord, the Bridegroom, should be taken away from them. Then, at his approaching departure, sorrow filled their hearts. Yet this was but for a season; with his return at Pentecost, the joy of the Church returned.

II. A GENERAL AND ENDURING REASON WHY THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS SHOULD NOT BE ASCETIC. True, Christ has gone; so, if his personal presence alone restrained the disciples from mourning, sadness and fasting would be appropriate in the Church of the Redeemer, as the customary habit and sentiment. But the case is otherwise; our Lord himself has justified, in this passage, a lasting antagonism between his religion and practices of asceticism. Not that, under the Christian dispensation, fasting is unlawful; but that it should be rather exceptional and special than distinctive of the new life. The fact is, as Christ shows in these two parables, that there is a want of harmony between the old practices and the new faith, the old garment and the new cloth, the old skins and the new wine. 1. Christianity is a religion of *the spirit rather than of the form*. Our Lord teaches that it is better not to appear unto men to fast; it is better to humble ourselves in secret, because of our sins and the sins of our time, before our God. There is much danger of regarding fasting as in itself, because a mortification of the flesh, acceptable to God. This is a mistaken conception, as may be learned even from some passages of Old Testament Scripture. 2. Christianity is a religion of *love rather than of fear*. Those who are in dread of justice may seemingly be justified in their attitude of mind, when they so give way to sentiments of abject self-abasement that they cover themselves with sackcloth and ashes, and deprive themselves of necessary food. But those who are conscious that, through Christ, they are living in the enjoyment of the Divine favour, can scarcely be expected—at least, as an habitual exercise—to mourn and fast. They “rejoice evermore;” the “joy of the Lord is their strength;” his “statutes are their song in the house of their pilgrimage.” For them, “perfect love casteth out fear.” 3. Christianity is a religion *rather of hopefulness than of gloom*. It teaches us to look forward to the future with bright anticipation, ardently to desire the return of the Lord in triumph, and cheerfully to prepare for a glorious future. The Bridegroom will return and claim his own; how can the spiritual spouse do other than look forward, hopefully and joyfully, to the glad and festive day?

III. The general principle underlying our Lord’s reply is this: THE FORM OF RELIGION, WITHOUT THE REALITY AND SPIRITUAL SUBSTANCE, IS ALTOGETHER VAIN. All religious observances have a tendency,—such is the weakness of human nature,—to harden into dead formalities. At first they are good, for they are the expression of sincere feeling and conviction. But by-and-by the spiritual disappears, and the mere ceremony remains. And the unspiritual mistake the form for the substance, and come to flatter themselves that they are religious and that it is well with them, when they are simply by ceremonial excuses justifying themselves for a heart and life profoundly irreligious. Thus it was with multitudes of the Jews, in the time of our Saviour and of the apostles. What stress they laid upon circumcision, upon sacrifices, upon ceremonial purity, upon tithes, upon alms, upon sabbath-keeping, upon observing sacred festivals, upon fasts appointed and traditional, upon the customs and superstitions received from their fathers! And how, at the same time, they neglected the weightier matters of the Law! Hence our Lord’s frequent upbraidings of the scribes and Pharisees. They deceived themselves, they deluded others, they hindered the hearts of men from receiving the gospel. When Christianity was established, it was threatened by the same disastrous tendency. First, the Judaizers endeavoured to overlay the spirituality of the gospel with Jewish rites and customs. And afterwards, when

Christianity was in the act of vanquishing paganism, it submitted to assume much that was heathen. The great system of sacerdotalism, with its sacramentarianism, its saint-worship, and its mortifications and asceticism, was acquired from heathenism. And how much of this survives even to the present day, we have only to look around us that we may see. Now, Christ in his answer supplies the true corrective and safeguard against the action of this evil tendency. Why should his disciples fast, when (as a matter of fact) they were happy and jubilant? It would have been mere formality and hypocrisy, than which nothing was more repugnant to his spiritual doctrines and the character of his religion.

APPLICATION. 1. Let those who fast, fast in spirit, and afflict the soul, and place no confidence in the flesh. 2. Let those who feast, feast as the children of God and the friends of Christ. 3. Let the demeanour of Christians be such, so glowing with sincere and hopeful cheerfulness, as to commend the glorious gospel.

Vers. 23—28.—The sabbath. The grounds upon which the Pharisees and scribes took offence at our Lord and his ministry were various. Some of these—as, e.g., his claim to pardon sin—were very serious; for in such a case Jesus was either an impostor and blasphemer, or he was the Son of God. Others were very trivial, as, e.g., his neglect of some unauthorized traditions, or his preference of moral duty to observance of the ceremonial law. In this and in the following incident, the *sabbath* was the ground of misunderstanding, and Christ's preference of humanity to ceremonial compliance occasioned, on the part of his adversaries, hatred, enmity, and conspiracy. Still, the malice of Christ's foes furnished opportunities for the assertion of great religious principles. From this narrative we learn that *human need should take precedence of ceremony and tradition*. There is ever a danger lest the outward husk of religion should be mistaken for the precious kernel. Nowhere is this danger more stringently guarded against than in the conduct and the discourses of Christ. The principle is vindicated—

I. BY AN APPEAL TO OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY. It was a master-stroke of controversy on the part of the great Teacher to appeal to the Scriptures, which the Pharisees professed to hold in such reverence. The conduct of David, one of the great heroes and saints of their national history, was quoted in justification of the conduct of the disciples of Jesus. To eat is a necessity of human nature, and some kind of action, of rudimentary labour, is necessary in order to eating. The disciples of Jesus had plucked ears of corn, had rubbed the grain free from husk in their hands, and had eaten, in order to satisfy their hunger. Possibly in so doing they had violated the tradition of the elders, which maintained that anything approaching to labour on the sabbath day was an infraction of the Divine command. However, the Lord vindicated them by the example of David, who, for the purpose of providing food for himself and his companions, had not hesitated to take the shewbread of the sanctuary, which was reserved for the use of the priests alone; and this probably also on the sabbath day. Punctiliousness of observance must give way before those necessities which the Creator has impressed upon our human nature.

II. BY THE ASSERTION THAT THE SABBATH IS THE MEANS TO WHICH HUMAN WELFARE IS THE END. How blessed an institution is the weekly day of rest! The importance of the sabbath to man's bodily and spiritual welfare is very much overlooked by many advocates for the employment of labour on that day, and by many Christians who, in their zeal for men's instruction and salvation, labour seven days a week instead of six. Yet, as we are here taught, we are not to make an idol of even so precious an institution. The day of rest was designed for man's good; and it must be maintained that man's good comes first, and the sabbath next. Thus it is allowable and it is required to perform "works of necessity and mercy" on the sabbath, and even on the Lord's day, which may be regarded as the higher sabbath of the Christian. Those who preach and teach, who visit the sick and the afflicted, although their doing these things may make them labour seven days in the week, may make them "sabbath-breakers," are held guiltless by the application of the great principle of the text.

III. BY THE CLAIM OF CHRIST TO LORDSHIP OVER THE SABBATH DAY. Christ is indeed Lord of all. He uses his lordship not so much to institute as to abrogate ceremonies, not so much to burden the religious life with observances as to set it free from

such trammels. He imparts the true sabbatic spirit ; he gives the rest of heart, which is even more important than bodily repose. He sanctifies all days by his Spirit, making every day to the Christian better and more sacred than the holiest festival or the most solemn fast to the Jew of old. If the day be begun, continued, and ended in him, and if all our works be done under his lordship and by his inspiration, life itself will be a true sabbath, filled with the rest of his love and with the music of his praise.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. Guard against a merely external, ceremonial religion, which is ever prone to degenerate into superstition. 2. Consider the preciousness of the weekly day of rest ; it was given for our advantage ; it should be used for the glory of God, in the welfare of those for whom Christ lived and died. 3. Think aright of him who, without presumption, could claim a prerogative so lofty as lordship over the sabbath. To be filled with his spirit, to yield ourselves to his authority,—this is the best means of fulfilling the spiritual law of the God who is a Spirit, and who asks for spiritual homage and service.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12.—Cure of the paralytic. I. **DIFFICULTIES ARE READILY OVERCOME WHERE THERE IS FAITH.** The house was probably a poor one, roofed with mud and shingle. It would be easy, therefore, to dig a hole and obtain entrance in that way. But doing it required a certain amount of ingenuity and effort, which proved that the man and his friends were resolved to get to Jesus and obtain the cure. All this trouble and thoughtfulness was the outcome of faith in Christ. Their boldness was the confidence of faith. Where the heart is right, difficulties in the way of seeking or following the Saviour will only call forth keener ingenuity and higher resolution.

II. **FAITH EVER SECURES THE SYMPATHY AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF CHRIST.** Christ's first words were not chiding, but a welcome. He said, "Son [child], thy sins are forgiven." There would be tenderness and sympathy in the tone as well as in the words. He spoke as a father or an elder brother. The sick man may have been young. But in the midst of all the kindness the guilty past of the man is not forgotten. He had been a sinner, and probably his malady was but the fruit of his misdoing. A thrill of wonder and fear, mingled with more hopeful feelings, would pervade him as he listened. Here was one who knew all about him, and yet had compassion on him ! The faith of the patient and his bearers (possibly relatives) was thus rewarded beyond their hopes. A greater boon was conferred than they sought. Christ is never satisfied with half measures. He goes at once to the root of the evil, and seeks to save a man altogether, in soul as well as in body and fortune.

III. **IN SHOWING MERCY CHRIST ASSUMES THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY.** Whilst the nature of the case before him demanded that the cure should be thus radical, the mere utterance of the words, "Thy sins are forgiven," involved a claim which those looking on were not ready to acknowledge. 1. *Faith in being taxed is rewarded.* The believing men were required to believe more, and more definitely, than they had already done. And to him chiefly concerned there were already inward witnesses in favour of the new claim. That Christ should have divined the secret source of the bodily weakness and mental unrest was a presumption that he was what he professed implicitly to be. Doubtless, with the rising of his spirit to the new duty of recognizing the authority of Jesus, the sick man's conscience would receive sudden and unlooked-for relief. The tide of life would turn again in the glad flush of peace and happiness. Christ's demands upon men to believe more than they already do are intended as conditions of his bestowing greater blessings. 2. *In order to do all that he was sent to do, Christ required to be Divine.* The argument was perfectly sound, which the scribes carried on "in their hearts." Only God can, in the ultimate, forgive sins. Yet his power is sometimes delegated according to fixed principles and appointments. But probably they included in their reasoning the unspoken evidence given in Christ's manner, that he forgave out of and from himself. The entire circumstances of the case show that he must have done this. And so ever, when men come to him, it is that he

may exercise this authority and power. What they did not think of was the possibility of him whom they accused being "very God of very God."

IV. DIFFICULTIES ARE CREATED WHERE FAITH IS ABSENT. The simple soul of the paralytic grasped the secret of Divinity which escaped the subtlety of the scribes. Their very knowledge stood in their way, because it was not spiritually acquired and employed.

V. THE POWER OF CHRIST IS A PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATION OF HIS AUTHORITY. 1. Strictly speaking, healing the paralysis of the man was not, when taken by itself, on the same level with the forgiveness of his sins; but the two actions are distinctly declared to be in connection with one another. They both appealed to the same Divine power. If, therefore, the pretension to this power made in the former utterance was blasphemous, the ability to perform the consequent miracle would not have been forthcoming. It is also possible that the visible fact of the cure may have been meant as a making good of the invisible transaction declared in the first words. They were shown thereby not to be mere words. 2. And similarly, but even more cogently, is the proof of our Lord's divinity furnished by the spiritual experience of those whom he redeems. That they are forgiven is witnessed to in the subsequent power given to live righteously, and to continue in fellowship with a reconciled God. To those who are conscious of this inward result ("kept by the power of God through faith, unto salvation") there is no other evidence so conclusive.—M.

Vers. 13—22.—*Levi's feast: the moral questions it occasioned.* 1. (Vers. 13—17.) *Eating with publicans and sinners.* In calling Matthew (Levi) from the receipt of custom, our Saviour made him relinquish all his old pursuits and companions, and conferred upon him an unexpected honour. The feast given by him was, therefore, partly a farewell, partly a celebration. In overstepping the boundary line of Jewish religious and social etiquette, the Lord performed an act of great significance, which was sure to call forth remark.

I. SUPERFICIAL KNOWLEDGE, WHEN LINKED WITH MALICE, WILL PUT THE WORST CONSTRUCTION UPON THE BEST ACTIONS. Conventional morality was invoked to condemn Christ in mingling with the publicans. No trouble was taken to ascertain the true character of the feast. By their criticism the Pharisees exposed their own hollowness and unspirituality. They condemned themselves in seeking to condemn Christ. For such judgments men are responsible. The greatest care and most spiritual view should be taken ere judgment is passed upon the actions of others, especially when their character is known to be good.

II. IT IS THE MOTIVE WHICH IS THE TRUE KEY TO THE NATURE OF ACTIONS. 1. *This applies absolutely in the case of actions in themselves indifferent, or only conventionally forbidden; but in all actions it is an indispensable canon of ultimate judgment.* Even where the external nature of an action is unmistakable, the utmost care should be taken in forming an opinion. Absolute and unqualified judgment is for God alone. 2. *When challenged for our conduct it is well to explain the principles upon which we act.* Christ at once makes known his motives, and with no anger. Yet in so doing he judged his accusers. They pretended to be whole, and so could not object to him doing good to those who required his aid. Why were they dissatisfied, if not from secret disquietude with their own condition and attitude? Irony proceeding from deepest spiritual discernment!

III. THE HOLIEST SOUGHT OUT AND COMPANIED WITH SINNERS THAT HE MIGHT MAKE THEM HOLY. It is only by sympathy, and by appeals to their highest nature, that sinful men can be won to God.—M.

Vers. 13—22.—*Levi's feast: the moral questions it occasioned.* 2. (Vers. 18—22.) *The rationale of fasting.* I. THE ORIGIN OF THE QUESTION. This seemed to be natural enough. A real perplexity was created which required to be removed. There is no malice or bitterness in the inquiry. Amongst spiritual associates all such difficulties ought to be frankly faced and kindly discussed. 1. *The feast of Levi was coincident with a traditional fast.* The Pharisees and the disciples of John both observed the fast, were observing it at the time the others were feasting. Now, within the band of Christ's disciples were two sections—one formerly wholly, and still to a great extent, identified with the doctrines and observances of John; the other following without question the

spiritual guidance of Christ. The contrast would, therefore, be very marked. A schism seemed to discover itself within the circle of the brethren. 2. *The general life of the disciples of Christ was not so ascetic as that of John's, and the traditional fasts of Judaism were not so strictly observed by them.* The special occasion was only a striking instance of general divergence. In answering the question, then, the key would be given to the entire life which Christ desired men to lead.

II. ITS SOLUTION. The answer was prompt and kindly, and it seemed to justify the question. It goes to the very root of the subject. No attention is given to the circumstance of fasting being a positive or conventional enactment. Its meaning and purpose are at once referred to, as alone determining the validity or otherwise of its claims to being observed. 1. *Subjective conditions and aims are stated to be of chief consequence in regard to such a question.* This was a new departure, a rationalizing of positive law and observance. Institutions and practices of religion are to stand or fall according to their spiritual adaptation to the needs of the human soul. 2. *Circumstances which determine spiritual states are, therefore, decisive as to the obligation or otherwise of fasting.* The Jews under the Law were without Christ; now he had come, and the spiritual experience of men who received him was wholly altered. Fasting would be out of keeping, because the mood of those who discerned and believed Christ (the Bridegroom) was festive and joyous. A feast rather than a fast was therefore the fitting ceremony. 3. *A fundamental distinction exists between Judaism and Christianity.* The one was old and ready to vanish away; the other was new and instinct with fresh, vigorous life. Any confusion of them would therefore be mutually injurious. This distinctive character of each is represented in two illustrations, viz. (1) The old garment and the new piece of cloth. It would be foolish to employ Christianity merely to make good the defects of Judaism. The combination would not only be motley; it would be disastrous, because of the difference of spiritual force in the two systems. Judaism was antiquated, full of holes and rottenness, and ready to vanish away. To patch it up with the gospel would, therefore, only hasten its destruction. Fasting was representative of the legalistic or external rites of Judaism; Christianity was as new and "unfulfilled" cloth, which would shrink when put upon the old garment, and make the rent worse. This is one side of the truth; and in (2) the new wine and the old bottles, we have the other. Legal forms and observances are inadequate to contain and express the fresh, spiritual, ever-expanding life of the Christian. Spiritual truth and life must create their own ritual, and dictate their own ideal of morality.—M.

Vers. 23—28.—*The sabbath made for man.* I. THE PURPOSE OF THE SABBATH IS TO BE KEPT IN VIEW IN INTERPRETING ITS OBLIGATIONS.

II. RULES WHICH DO NOT HAVE REGARD TO THIS MAY VIOLATE WHAT THEY PROFESS TO PRESERVE. 1. The disciples were within the written permission of the Law. "To pluck and rub with the hand ears from the field of a neighbour was allowed; Moses forbade only the sickle (Deut. xxiii. 25). But the matter belonged to the thirty-nine chief classes (fathers), each of which had its subdivisions (daughters), in which the works forbidden on the sabbath were enumerated. This was their hypocritical way, to make of trifling things matters of sin and vexation to the conscience" (Braune). 2. "Men see that others neglect rules, when they see not their own violation of principles" (Godwin).

III. THE BEST INTERESTS OF MAN ARE TO BE SERVED BY THE SABBATH. 1. *"The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath."* This is proved by an incident from the life of David. As they revered David, the allusion was an *argumentum ad hominem* as well as an illustration of a general principle. By that occurrence it was shown that even the sanctities of the temple were subordinated to the welfare of God's anointed and his followers. If, then, these things bent to the highest interests of man, so must the sabbath. 2. *"The Son of man is Lord of the sabbath."* This is an inference from the foregoing principle. For Christ claimed this authority not merely as a man, but as "the Son of man in his inviolable holiness, and in his mysterious dignity (intimated in Daniel) as the holy Child and Head of humanity appearing in the name of God" (Lange). He summed up in his own person the highest interests of the race. And as Lord of the sabbath he uses it ever for the advancement of holiness and the development of spiritual freedom in his saints.—M.

Vers. 3—5.—*The pardon of the paralytic.* This miracle is recorded also by Matthew and Luke. The former indicates its chronological position as occurring after the return from Gadara. Our gracious Lord “again entered into Capernaum,” so slow is he to leave the most undeserving. The news of his arrival quickly spread; indeed, whenever he enters a home or a heart, he cannot be hid. True love and eager faith will surely find him, and in this passage we find an example of that truth.

I. THE COMING OF THE PARALYTIC is full of teaching for those who are now seeking the Saviour. 1. *He had friends who helped him.* Powerless to move, he was peculiarly dependent on their kindness. A sufferer from palsy not only needs much patience and resignation himself, but creates a demand for it in others, and so may prove by his presence in the home to be a means of grace to those called on to minister to him. To serve and help those who are permanent invalids is a holy service, to which many are secretly called, who therein may prove themselves good and faithful servants of the Lord. Such ministration needs a gentle hand, a patient spirit, a courageous heart, and a noble self-forgetfulness. Above all, we should endeavour to bring our sick ones to the feet of Jesus, that they may rejoice in his pardoning love. Our counsels, our example, and our prayers may do for them what these people did for their paralyzed friend. 2. *He found difficulties in approaching Christ.* The crowd was impassable. They ascended the staircase outside (Matt. xxiv. 17), and so reached the flat roof. Then they broke up the covering of the roof and let down the bed on which the sick of the palsy lay. These obstacles tried their faith, proved and purified it. There are difficulties in the way of our approach to Christ; some of which may be removed by our friends, others of which can only be overcome by our own faith and courage. Prejudices, easily besetting sins, evil companions, are examples. 3. *The difficulties were victoriously surmounted.* The fact that they were so was a manifest proof of the faith which animated this man and his friends. Some way is always open to those eager for salvation, though it may be one that seems unusual to onlookers.

II. THE GRACIOUSNESS OF THE SAVIOUR. 1. *He knew the man's deepest wants.* Probably the paralytic was more troubled about his sin than about his sickness, although his friends did not know it. We ought to be more anxious about the soul than about the body. Christ Jesus reads our secret thoughts. “He knew what was in man.” He noticed and exposed the unexpressed anger of his enemies (ver. 8). But while he discovers the secret sin, far more readily does he discern the silent longing for pardon. 2. *He was willing and waiting to bless.* There was no delay. The strange interruption to teaching was not resented but welcomed. At once he spoke the word of pardon for which the man's heart was hungering, although he foresaw the indignation and scorn which would follow on the declaration, “Thy sins be forgiven thee.” Divine love is not to be restrained by human narrowness, whether in the Church or outside it. 3. *He showed himself ready and able to forgive.* Possibly our Lord saw a connection between this illness and some special sin. He guards us, however, against supposing that it is always so (Luke xiii. 15; John ix. 3). Perhaps the secret pangs of conscience were in the way of physical restoration here. Sometimes pardon was given after cure (Luke xvii. 19; John v. 14). The scribes were right in their declaration that none but God can forgive sins. The Levitical priests, under the old dispensation, were authorized to announce Divine forgiveness, as God's representatives, after the offering of appointed sacrifices; but the scribes very properly recognized that Jesus claimed to do far more than that. He admitted that it was so, and as the Son of man (Dan. vii. 13) he claimed the power they denied him, and at once gave a proof that the power was actually his. They might have argued that there was no evidence that the man's sins were forgiven; that Jesus was making a safe claim, which could not be tested. In order to meet this he said in effect, “I will now claim and exercise a power the result of which you can see; and it shall either brand me as an impostor, or else it shall be a sign that my former utterance had effect.” Then said he to the sick of the palsy, “Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.” Like that man, may our recovered and redeemed powers be instantaneously used in obedience to Christ.—A. B.

Vers. 14, 15.—*Levi's call from dishonour to discipleship.* All the sacred Scriptures serve to show that God's redemption is meant for those who are conscious of their sin, however grievous have been their offences. Promises prove this. Isaiah's description

of a people whose head was faint and whose heart was sick is followed by the invitation, "Come now, and let us reason together," etc., and this is intensified by the gracious words of Christ, "Come unto me, all ye that labour," etc. *Facts* suggest the same truth, e.g. God's dealing with Adam, the call of idolatrous Abram, and the pardon of Manasseh; and all such evidences are concentrated in Christ. Descended through Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba, and David, he chose no spotless ancestry according to the flesh, but was from the first "numbered with the transgressors." His life-work touched the sinful—the woman who was a sinner, the adulteress of Samaria, the thief on the cross, etc. No wonder that his gospel was received by publicans and by sinners, in the house of Herod, in the court of Nero, among the idolatrous Ephesians and the profligate Corinthians. He came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Levi the publican was an example of these. Let us consider—

I. THE POSITION LEVI OCCUPIED. "Levi" was the original name borne by the evangelist and apostle who was known in the Church as "Matthew," equivalent to "God's gift," he being so named because in him the Lord had a fulfilment of his own words, "All that the Father hath *given* me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Levi was a tax-gatherer, a rate collector, employed by the richer publicans (of whom Zacchæus was an example) to collect dues levied on the lake fishery or on the traffic passing through the district to Damascus; and consideration of what that involved may encourage the despondent. 1. *He was low in the social scale.* As a standing emblem of the authority of Roman tyranny, the tax-gatherer, especially when, like Levi, he was a renegade Jew, was intensely hated and despised; none of his fellow-countrymen would speak or eat with him. From the first Christ set himself against this prejudice and social distinction. As the "Son of man," as the King of men, he would have no narrow circle from which to draw his followers. His blessings were for the most despised and poor, as are God's air and sunshine. 2. *He was an outcast from religious men.* As patriots, the Jews hated him; as upholders of the ancient faith, they excommunicated him. Hence Matthew the apostle would seem to be a marvel of grace. The excommunicated man was to build up the communion of the Christian Church, the apostle was to become a pillar of Divine truth, the instrument of oppression was to proclaim true liberty, the byword was to become a burning and a shining light. God chose despised things to bring to nought those which were great and honoured. The Church's judgment is not always right, therefore "judge not, that ye be not judged." Christ saw in Levi one who was seeking higher things, and he said to him, "Follow me." 3. *He was subject to grievous temptations.* The bad reputation of the publicans was doubtless, to a large extent, deserved. The vicious system of raising revenue adopted by Rome, and still practised in Turkey, would tend to make men avaricious, hard, and unscrupulous. Large sums of money passed through their hands, and were loosely collected and accounted for; bribes were frequently offered and universally accepted, in order to obtain exemptions and privileges; and a publican, from the mere fact of being one, had no reputation to lose, so that if he had been more scrupulous than others he would get no credit for it. In that position Christ saw Levi and pitied him, and thence in his love he called him, teaching us that none are so low, or have circumstances so adverse, as to be beyond the reach of his pity and salvation.

II. THE SERVICE LEVI ATTEMPTED. 1. *He freely gave up all to follow Jesus.* It was a lucrative position, but he felt called to something nobler, for the sake of which any sacrifice should be made. Suggest certain trades and occupations which are now such a hindrance to the Divine life that for Christ's sake they ought to be abandoned by his followers. Indicate the call which sometimes comes to Christians to give up even innocent employments, for the higher work of preaching Christ. 2. *He invited others to see and hear his Master.* Luke (v. 27) speaks of this as a "great feast" which Levi made in honour of his Lord; to which he invited his old comrades, who like himself would be popularly ranked among "the publicans and sinners." The feast was an occasion for speaking his farewell, and giving reasons for the change in his life. He wished to show that he was about to serve One greater than Cæsar, and to do a nobler work. At his request Jesus became his guest. May that gracious Lord appear in our homes, at all our festive gatherings, and so show himself through ~~us~~ to those around us, that they too may find joy in his service!—A. R.

Vers. 18—20.—On fasting. Weak brethren too often do the work of evil men. The disciples of John, who were not hostile to our Lord, were made on this occasion the tools of the Pharisees, whose great object was to damage our Lord's reputation amongst the people, and to weaken the allegiance of his followers. The Baptist had never forbidden his disciples to observe the customary fasts, and his own ascetic life had taught them such lessons of self-denial that they readily observed them, especially at a time like this, when he was languishing in prison. Sore and sensitive in heart as they were, it was easy for the Pharisees to suggest that Jesus owed much to their teacher's testimony; that he had professedly been John's Friend and Fellow-worker; that he was doing nothing whatever to effect his deliverance; that he did not even fast for grief because of his imprisonment, but was enjoying social festivity in the house of a publican. But although the design of the Pharisees was to convict our Lord of disregard of national tradition and pious custom, and to condemn him for forgetfulness of his imprisoned friend, they only succeeded in educing a complete justification of his conduct, and the announcement of a noble principle which we have to consider, viz. *that religious observances are only acceptable to God when they are the natural outcome of the religious life of him who offers them.* In this passage we see the following facts:—

I. HYPOCRISY IS CONDEMNED. John's disciples were not guilty of this offensive sin. No doubt their fasting was, at this time, a true expression of inward grief; and was on other occasions used by them as a means of spiritual discipline. Our Lord does not imply that they were hypocritical, but asserts that his own disciples would be, if they outwardly joined in a fast which would be an untrue representation of their present feeling. Hopeful and jubilant in the presence of their Lord, his disciples could not fast, and would be wrong to do so. This tacitly condemns all fasts which arise from improper or untrue motives, or which are outwardly kept at the dictation of others. The principle, however, is of general application, teaching us that, under the new dispensation, no outward manifestation of devotion is acceptable to God, except as it is true to the inward feeling of the worshipper. The sin of unreality was often rebuked by the prophets, and still more vigorously by John the Baptist and by our Lord; indeed, the sternest words ever uttered by Christ were levelled against the unreal, insincere, and hypocritical Pharisees. From that sin he would save his disciples, and therefore asserted that as their inward condition did not lead them to fasting, a fast would at that time be unnatural and perilous. Be you who or what you may, be real and true before God and man. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."

II. EXTERNALISM IS REBUKED. By externalism we mean the putting of external religious ceremonies in the place of spiritual acts of worship. We distinguish this decisively from hypocrisy, as the words are by no means interchangeable—some of the Pharisees, for example, being thoroughly sincere. But many rites enjoined under the old dispensation, which were meant to have spiritual significance and to give utterance to soul-longings, had become mere husks in which the kernel had rotted. Sacrifices were offered without sense of guilt; washings were frequent, even to absurdity, but did not express conscious uncleanness of soul; alms were largely given, but without generosity; fasts were observed without any humiliation of soul before God. Religion had become mechanical and sculless, and from that curse Christ would save his disciples. Hence he commended the mite of the widow, and not the large gifts of the wealthy; he chose his friends not from the priests in the temple, but from peasants in Galilee; he discerned faith not in the long prayers recited by the Pharisees, but in the secret petition of the trembling woman who only durst touch the hem of his garment. To him the unuttered sigh was a prayer, the generous purpose an alms-deed, and a holy aspiration was an evening sacrifice. So here he taught that fasting was not a rite of any value in itself, and that self-inflicted penance was not as such pleasing to God. (Apply this to what is similar in our days.)

III. FREEDOM IS PROCLAIMED. He who condemned fasting and all other rites and ceremonies, when put in a wrong place, allowed any of these to be used by his disciples when they naturally and truly expressed their inward spiritual life. When, for example, the Bridegroom was taken away, when the shadow of Calvary's cross rested on them, they fasted; for they had no heart to do anything else. But when the Resurrection morning dawned, and the gates of the grave were opened,

and the Bridegroom came back to his waiting bride, to fulfil the promise, "I am with you always," then, and on the day of Pentecost, they could not fast. If now there are times when to our doubting minds the heavenly Bridegroom seems far away; if now we ever feel that temporary abstinence from food, or from pleasure, or from work, would help our spiritual life,—then let us fast; but even then let us do so in remembrance of the words, "Thou when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast." In regard to this and all other ceremonies, "Ye, brethren, are called unto liberty, only use not that liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."

IV. JOYFULNESS IS INCULCATED. In this respect the practices of our Lord presented a striking contrast to those of John or of the Pharisees. Here he justifies his disciples, as formerly he had defended himself, against aspersions cast upon them for joining in social festivity. Appealing to the consciences of his questioners, and alluding to the last words of testimony their master had uttered concerning himself (John iii. 29), he asked, "Can the sons of the bridechamber mourn, while the bridegroom is with them?" We ought to be so glad because of our relation to Christ, because of his constant presence and undying love, that, like Paul, we can be "joyful in tribulations also," and sing God's praise in the darkness of a prison.—A. R.

Vers. 1-12.—*The paralytic.* I. THE PARALYTIC A TYPE OF HELPLESSNESS IN GENERAL. In this case both physical and moral. No malady is serious but that which attacks the freedom of the soul in its seat.

II. DIFFICULTIES ARE FOR THE TRIAL OF FAITH. The physical difficulty of getting to Christ's presence we may view as a parable or allegory of deeper moral difficulties. How hard to be a Christian—to reach the truth and live in the light of it! Argument breaks down; many gaps in our reasoning it is not easy to get over. But—

"What if the breaks themselves should prove at last
The most consummate of contrivances
To train a man's eye, teach him what is faith?"

III. THE SEAT OF HEALTH OFTEN LIES IN THE IMAGINATION. A man has a dark picture of himself, his sin, his doom, etc., constantly before him. He cannot be well or happy. Reverse this picture, and the whole nature, physical and moral, recovers its healthy working. Christ will not suffer men to despond or despair of themselves. Believe yourself condemned, a life-failure, and you remain a paralytic. Believe in your Divine possibility and future; you can rise and walk. When the gospel is truly preached, men are not crushed, but uplifted; not discouraged, but heartened about themselves.

IV. THE GIFT OF SYMPATHY AND OF POWER. Here was a signal example of the *diagnosis* of Jesus. He *saw*, as we say, what was the matter. He *spoke* to the point; and his word was an idea and a power. Never is true sympathy disjoined from power. To love our fellows is to enjoy the noblest power.—J.

Vers. 15-22.—*Matthew's house.* I. THE SOCIALITY OF JESUS. He was found at ordinary dinner-parties and entertainments throughout his course, and to the last. He was a contrast in this to the ascetic Baptist. He was found in "questionable" company. But the company of Pharisees would have been as "questionable." With a clear conscience a man may go into the miscellany of people called "society." A free and open manner is certain to bring remark and censure upon him. But better to mix with others and be thought "no better" than they, than hold aloof and sour the heart with Pharisaic self-conceit. There is danger in general society, and danger in religious cliques.

II. LOVE; JUSTIFYING ALL ECCENTRICITIES. It was eccentric to mix with those common and tabooed people. The whole conduct of Jesus was eccentric, and brought about fatal consequences. To aim at singularity is a foppery; to follow love's impulse alone is graceful, generous, polite, refined. This *is* singular. Would there were more of such singularity!

III. NATURALNESS. The spirit of man is like the face of earth and sky. Clouds pass over it; the sun is hidden. Anon all is bright again, and birds sing. To follow the

lead of joy is in the best sense natural. Let the face and manner reflect the inner mind to reverse this is to act a part. The pure and lovely hypocrisy is that which tries to affect the mien of mirth, though the heart be heavy. To put on the mask of gloom for the sake of warning others is Pharisaic, not Christian. Jesus is the example of the perfect gentleman.

IV. THE PLACE AND TIME OF ASCETICISM. It is the reaction of the mind against certain sorrows. We must be true again to feeling and to fancy. It would be a violence to natural taste to put on wedding garments when a friend has passed away, however logical it might seem. There is a natural homœopathy of grief. Speaking of it and representing it outwardly tends to its relief; but to mimic a grief we feel not is to do a violence to ourselves. Be true to yourself: this is the only secret of moral beauty, from the lowest to the highest moods, and is the lesson of Jesus.—J.

Vers. 23—28.—*Love greater than law.* I. HUMAN LIFE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE MEANS OF LIVING. All laws, ceremonial or otherwise, may be regarded as means towards ends. What end do we know higher than human weal and bliss? Christ points out that this is the real end of legislation—man, his education, his good, physical and spiritual.

II. IT IS A GROSS FALLACY TO PUT THE MEANS BEFORE THE END. This the Pharisees did. They said, "Man for the sabbath." Christ said, "The sabbath for man." Ceremonies are all means of spiritual culture. Not so with moral ideals. They are our end.

III. LAW IS ROOTED IN LOVE. Christ is the representative of Divine love. If he by example or precept declares that a law is to be suspended or abrogated, this is in the interests of love. How absurd would it be, on a desert island, for a shipwrecked crew, almost starving, to refuse to avail themselves of food cast in their way, e.g. by a chance flight of birds, because it was a fast day! Analogous was the case mentioned by Christ (ver. 26). The sabbath had no meaning except as an expression of Divine love; and the rigid observance of it in defiance of love's dictates would be a mockery. Christ is Lord of love, and therefore Lord of law.—J.

Vers. 1—12.—*The sick of the palsy: the spiritual and physical healing.* The excitement having subsided, Jesus enters again into Capernaum. He, in the house, was teaching, "Pharisees and doctors of the Law sitting by," from all parts. The mighty "power of the Lord was with him to heal," as was made evident before, or as was to be proved by this event. It being "noised that he was in the house, many were gathered together," crowding "about the door." But attention is arrested by the bold deed of four men, who, carrying one sick of the palsy, and finding it impossible to get into the presence of Jesus, ascend to the low flat roof, "and let down the bed whereon the sick of the palsy lay," as men are wont to let down straw and other things to-day in similar houses. Instantly the whole event assumes a spiritual character, and Jesus, for all time, gives the spiritual its pre-eminence: "Jesus, seeing their faith." The *spiritual* must take precedence, the *material* must follow.

I. IN ORDER TO SPIRITUAL HEALING A SUITABLE CONDITION IS NEEDFUL. Here and elsewhere that condition is expressed by the one word *faith*. Faith, though a simple act or condition of mind, is the result of many—consciousness of need, desire of relief, self-distrust, some knowledge of Christ, appreciative confidence leading to assured persuasion. In faith the soul is already at one with the Saviour; it has come to him; it is united to him. The faith of others besides that of the sick is a favourable condition. Here it first arrests attention: "Jesus, seeing their faith." How many are dependent for their salvation upon the faith and effort of others! By their deed they declared their faith. It said, "Thou canst;" if not also, "Thou wilt." Through their faith must be seen, however, that of the sufferer shining. For who urged them on to do even this for him? Would he have undergone the pain of this treatment had he not had faith? It is saying, as said another, "If I do but touch his garment, I shall be made whole." With the desire of the sufferer for relief the charity of his helpers mingled. Their acts of faith were so interwoven that they became one faith. It was this that Jesus saw.

II. WHERE THE SUITABLE SPIRITUAL CONDITION IS FOUND THE HEALING INEVITABLY TAKES PLACE. Yea, though the word declaring it be not uttered; and even when it is

uttered, men, "reasoning in their hearts," believe not. Where Jesus to-day sees faith—and he is always on the look-out for it—there he heals. The faith of sufferers and helpers must have respect to his promise and his power to heal, and not busy itself so much with listening for the word which declares the healing to be done. "Jesus, seeing their faith," and knowing there was the suitable condition for the reception of spiritual blessing, even above and beyond that for which they asked, "saith, Son, thy sins are forgiven." So is faith rewarded; so are spirituals put in their rightful place before temporals; not really to hinder the temporal, but the better to prepare for it.

III. THE OPPOSITION OF ANTAGONISTS IS USED BY CHRIST FOR THE GREATER CONFIRMATION OF THE BELIEVING ONES; and, in mercy, also to awaken conviction in the unbelieving heart. "Perceiving in his [own] spirit that they so reasoned" within the dark chambers of their hearts, he graciously condescended to reason with them. "If I can do the harder of two works, surely I can the easier. That ye will not doubt. But 'whether is easier' in your view, to say, 'Thy sins are forgiven;' or to say, 'Arise, take up thy bed and walk'? This must not only be said; to prove itself a real word of power, it must be done. Of this ye can be judges. But that ye—even ye reasoning and unbelieving ones—may know the unlimited power of the Son of man in the spiritual realm, behold a proof of his power in the material! A word declares it. 'I say unto thee, arise.'" A word of power indeed; for "he arose and took up the bed, and went forth before them all"—a visible, undeniable testimony that the true kingdom of God had come, that the true King was amongst them; and they also were not only amazed, but "they glorified God," and confessed, "We never saw it on this fashion." So he who maketh "the wrath of man to praise him," maketh the thought of evil to turn to the greater good of them whom he would bless.

IV. THE WONDERFUL POWER FOR THE GOOD OF ALL THAT FAITH IN THE SON OF MAN CALLS INTO PLAY. Therefore let every one who has faith use it: in faith bringing the sin-stricken to Jesus; with strong faith encouraging all to seek him, to yield to him, to follow, and to trust in him. And let every worker work in faith; for the faith of the bearer of the sick is regarded. Let parents bring their children to Jesus in faith; and pastors bring their flocks before him in faith; and friends, friends; and lovers of men lay the world at his feet in lowly, loving, believing prayer. Unbelief stays the strong arm of Christ, because it presents the unsuitable conditions before him who always acts according to the "laws" of his own kingdom. Faith is not strength, but acknowledged feebleness. We can aid the consciously feeble, but the presumptuously strong put themselves beyond the power of men and the will of the Lord.—G.

Vers. 13—22.—*Fasting*. "By the sea side" the great Teacher is heard by a listening multitude. Then passing near "the place of toll, his eye fell upon Levi, son of Alphaeus," whose service he imperatively claims. Levi, already called to be a disciple, now called to be an apostle, with much sacrifice arises to follow his Lord and Master to the end, so teaching for all future apostles and servants that the claims of the kingdom of Heaven stand first in importance, and must first be met. The simple, brief, authoritative command, "Follow me," may seem to need an exposition and expansion. It is the consummation, doubtless, of many words of instruction; and, perhaps, the outward call corresponds to an inward conviction of duty and an inward preparedness for the sacrifice. The story of compliance is almost as brief as that of the call, "And he arose and followed him." But this does not shut out the possibility of the calm adjustment by Levi of his affairs, as would be necessary before setting out upon a new course of life. Only the impetuous need hurry lest they should change their minds. Then, as it would seem in commemoration of the great change, when the new name Matthew may have been assumed, he, called like Elisha, to the sacred office, like him he makes his feast to his neighbours—his fellow tax-gatherers and friends—and his sacrifice to his God. And Jesus and his disciples are there. Then the murmuring voice of "the scribes of the Pharisees" must needs accuse him to his disciples: "He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners." Ah, happily for them and us he doth. He who did not always stoop to vindicate his ways, or tell wherefore or by "what authority" he did such and such things, now, however, vouchsafes to declare his reason. First parabolically: "The 'whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.' If these are the sick and faulty, as your words imply, they indeed need me." But

the word applies itself. The really "sick" may be the carping complainers. 'Then, more precisely, he declares his mission: "'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.' My dealings are with sinners. How can I reach them if I avoid them?' Let every self-conscious sinner who, bruised and sick, desires healing, hear this word of the Lord, the Lord who comes to "call" and to "eat with" the sinner that he may "heal" him. For all time he is to be known as the Seeker of the sinner and the Healer of the sick. But other murmurers are at hand. The feasting of Jesus and his disciples contrasts with the sadness and fasting of John—then in prison—and his disciples, now left alone; and with the punctilious fasting of the Pharisees. How is this? The reply from the lips of the Master is given in three parables, of which the first only, and but partially, is explained. The reply is not temporal and local merely, relating solely to the circumstances of that hour. The true parable has always within it a principle of universal application. The principle here embodied is—

THE TRUE PURPOSE OF FASTING. This may be defined to be the honest expression of conditions proper to be represented by fasting. "There is a time to fast, and a time to feast;" and the outward ordinance must correspond with the inward spirit. The symbols of sorrow must not be assumed when the heart is merry. The song, not the sackcloth; the wine of joy, not the ashes,—is the more becoming. It is a lesson on *congruity*, or the true harmony or fitness of things; and the lesson is enforced by three parables. 1. "Can the sons of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?" These words say, as plainly as words can, "Men must fast when there is occasion to fast." Is any sad? let the signs of sorrow appear; but if the heart within is merry, let him declare it in song. "Is any cheerful? let him sing praise." Fasting by order, whatever may be the state of the heart at the time, is not in accordance with Christ's teaching. It is not in harmony with itself. It becomes a species of hypocrisy. The day of loneliness and exposure and sadness will come; "and then will they fast in that day." 2. The patch upon the "old garment," while confirming the former lesson, declares the uselessness of patching up the old, dry, effete formalism with a piece of new, earnest, vigorous life. This would make the faults all the more obvious. Christ's work was not a patch upon the old; it was a new garment. How often men seem to be sewing a patch of Christian propriety on a faulty life—a mere mending of the torn and useless; and how impressively does this teach the need of a new garment altogether—the white robe of righteousness, an entire change of heart and life, a new birth! 3. But yet more forcibly Christ would teach by another parable the need there was for outward ordinances suited to the new spirit which he came to infuse. The fervent, vital evangelical spirit would certainly rend the dry, hard formalities of legalism. The words seem to refer to the more elastic organization which the expansive spirit would require. As to-day, when a new spirit enters the Churches, it demands not the rigid, unyielding methods of the past, but new ones. Even the good and useful that have long ministered to the spiritual comfort and joy of the fathers, must give place to others which the fresh, vigorous, inventive life of the children demands. "New skins" for "new wine." Yet they must be skins—that which is suitable to the holding of wine that it may be preserved. If changes be made in organizations or methods to suit the constantly fermenting times, they must be such as will conserve the true spirit of devotion and Christian brotherhood. What a striking comment on these words is found in the employment, by many even of the most rigid Churches in our day, of methods which the new spirit within them has demanded! Each may learn for himself: (1) The necessity for a strict correspondence between his outward religious performance and his inward religious state, and between all ordinances and the truths to which they relate. (2) The insufficiency of merely mending the old life of sin by a few patches of new manners. A whole new garment may be had for the asking. (3) The new reviving spirit should find its own appropriate means and ordinances, such as will preserve it from being dissipated and lost.—G.

Ver. 23—ch. iii. 6.—*The Lord and the law of the sabbath.* Jesus passed "through the cornfields," in the course of fulfilling his great mission of preaching, healing, and blessing. His "disciples began as they went" to pluck the ears of corn growing in abundance and probably lying across their path. It was the day of delights, a day hallowed and blessed. The plentifulness of the Divine beneficence, the quiet of the sabbath calm,

the glow of the bright light, would bring near to these self-sacrificing disciples thoughts of him who now most truly must provide for them their daily bread, the firstfruits of whose care they now gather. Gladly the lynx-eyed Pharisees arrest the great Teacher with their "Why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?" The direct reply is reserved, and the inquirers thrown back upon themselves and their carelessness in reading "what David did when he had need." The reply rests upon this word "need," and the following word "hungred," as in the second instance it rests upon "to do good, and to save a life." And we are reminded at once of the two classes of circumstances in which, as we have been accustomed to hear, the sabbath form may be broken without infringing the sabbath law, yea, even when that is done which at other times "it is not lawful" to do, viz. in works of necessity and works of charity. But underlying and overarching the whole is the law which the "Lord of the sabbath" now utters, a law wider in its application than the many details of sabbath observance—"The sabbath was made for man."

I. Let us first learn that **THE SABBATH WAS MADE.** It was a Divine institution. It was ordained of God. It was no mere accident that led men to mark the sabbath day with a special sanctity. From the many days, each laden with blessing, it pleased God to choose each seventh day for rest. To the toil-worn and weary how great an addition of blessing is this! The sabbath was not an imposition. It was designed to ease the heavily laden; to give time for song; to brighten the house by the presence of the father, who from morn till night was torn from his family by the necessities of labour; to minister to the demands of the higher nature; to bring all into closer alliance with things apiritual, by reflection and by worship. Truly this is to crowd it with blessing. It was not to be a dull day, for it was blessed; it was not to be a common day, for it was hallowed.

II. **BUT THE SABBATH WHICH WAS MADE, WAS MADE FOR MAN.** It was made in his interests, to promote his weal. Therefore, anything that can prove itself to be "for man"—for man at large—is in harmony with sabbath law and the sabbath spirit. And the strictest sabbath regulations must break down in presence of human necessities, provided they are indeed and of a truth necessities. Yea, the need of the ox or ass must be considered, whether it be the need of rest or deliverance from the pit. It is "lawful to do good," it is lawful "to save life," it is lawful to feed the hungry—even the sacred temple bread yielding service to needy men. The highest interest to be considered is the interest of human life. All must be sacrificed to it. The temple service itself must be stayed if the priest be needed to pluck one out of fire.

III. **SINCE IT IS MADE FOR MAN, HE WHO, BEING SON OF ALL, IS LORD OF ALL, IS OF NECESSITY AND RIGHT LORD OF MAN'S SABBATH.** Thus this great gift, the Divine preservation of which was always a sign of blessing, and the removal of which a sign of cursing,—this Lord's day and man's day, by the Lord's appointment and ordination, must, if men would be wise, be observed in such a way as to promote the highest interests of men, as they are interpreted by him who is Lord of them and Lord of their day. Oh, how well were it if the tight-laced, and the loose-laced also, would consider this great law, and make the sabbath a day over which its true Lord rules! Learn the sin of him who breaks the sabbath and who teaches men so. 1. He sins against God who made it to be a sabbath. 2. And he sins against man who needs it to be a sabbath, and for whom it was made. Is it a sabbath if the son of toil, after six long days of labour, is compelled to serve a seventh? This is contrary to the Law of the Lord. Far less is it a sabbath if all opportunities for religious worship, for apiritual refreshment, for family fellowship, are sacrificed; and still less if the day be spent in merely worldly amusements and pleasures; and least of all if it be devoted to evil. Then the day, designed for the good of body and soul, is spent to the injury or ruin of both. And so the Lord's day becomes the devil's day.—G.

Vers. 1—12. Parallel passages: Matt. ix. 2—8; Luke v. 17—26.—*The cure of the paralytic.* I. **THE POPULARITY OF OUR LORD.** After the cure of the leper, recorded at the close of the preceding chapter, our Lord, to avoid tumult or undue excitement on the part of the people, or an unseasonable precipitation of his plans, retired to and remained some short time in unfrequented places; but the crowds kept resorting (*ἤρχοντο*, imperfect) to him from all directions. After an interval of some days (*δι' ἡμερῶν*) it was

reported that he was back in Capernaum—that, having previously arrived (*eis*), he was now in the house. But what house? Some say Peter's; others, as Euthymius, that it was simply a house (*eis olkón tiva*); better perhaps understand it indefinitely of a house which he used as an inn or place of temporary abode, or to which as a sort of home he usually resorted. The expression may thus, in a certain sense, be equivalent to the German *zu Hause*.

II. STRANGE METHOD OF APPROACH. Again multitudes flocked to him; the humble dwelling was soon filled to overflowing, and still the crowd pressed on towards the door—even the parts next to it became so thronged that they could no longer contain or afford them room. As was his wont, he was speaking, perhaps conversationally (*ἐκδίδει*) the word, that is, of the kingdom or of his doctrine unto them. Just then a novel and curious incident added a new feature to the scene. On the outskirts of the crowd four men appeared, bearing a pallet between them, as St. Mark informs us—one at each corner probably; and on it lay a helpless invalid. But so intently were all eyes fixed on, or all necks stretched out towards, the great Teacher that the crowd paid no attention to the invalid and his bearers, or at least showed no disposition to make way for them. But, wherever there is a strong will, there is sure to be a way. They were not to be deterred from their purpose, nor to be kept back from him whose presence they sought. They mount the flat roof of the house, whether by steps outside or otherwise. They remove a sufficient portion of the roof, or, as it is literally, they unroof the roof, digging out the tiling overlaid with earth, and so let down the couch on which the sick of the palsy lay, “into the midst before Jesus,” as we learn from St. Luke.

III. ITS FEASIBILITY. The objections of infidel writers, who have shown much ignorance and wasted much strength in attacking the plan resorted to in bringing the paralytic into the presence of the Saviour, are sufficiently and satisfactorily refuted by the following plain statements of facts in ‘The Land and the Book’:—“Those (houses) of Capernaum, as is evident from the ruins, were, like those of modern villages in the same region, low, *very low*, with flat roofs, reached by a stairway from the yard or court. . . . Those who carried the paralytic . . . ascended to the roof, removed so much of it as was necessary, and let down their patient through the aperture. Examine one of these houses, and you will see at once that the thing is natural, and easy to be accomplished. The roof is only a few feet high, and by stooping down, and holding the corners of the couch—merely a thickly padded quilt, as at present in this region—they could let down the sick man without any apparatus of ropes or cords to assist them. . . . The whole affair was the extemporaneous device of plain peasants, accustomed to open their roofs, and let down grain, straw, and other articles, as they still do in this country. . . . The materials now employed are beams about three feet apart, across which short sticks are arranged close together, and covered with the thickly matted thorn bush called *bellan*. Over this is spread a coat of stiff mortar, and then comes the marl or earth that makes the roof. Now, it is easy to remove any part of this without injuring the rest. . . . They had merely to scrape back the earth from a portion of the roof over the *lewan*, take up the thorns and the short sticks, and let down the couch between the beams at the very feet of Jesus. The end achieved, they could speedily restore the roof as it was before. I have the impression, however,” Dr. Thomson goes on to say, “that the covering at least of the *lewan* was not made of earth, but of materials more easily taken up. It may have been merely of coarse matting, like the walls and roofs of Turkman huts; or it may have been made of boards, or even stone slabs (and such I have seen), that could be quickly removed. All that is necessary, however, for us to know is, that the roof was flat, low, easily reached, and easily opened, so as to let down the couch of the sick man; and all these points are rendered intelligible by an acquaintance with modern houses in the villages of Palestine.” The frequency and force with which this portion of the miracle has been assailed must be our apology for quoting the above somewhat long extract.

IV. THE EVIDENCE OF THEIR FAITH. The evangelist Matthew informs us that Jesus saw their faith, but makes no mention of the circumstances just referred to, which are so fully related by St. Luke, and with such particularity and minuteness of detail by St. Mark. The singularity of the effort which they made to reach the Saviour afforded ocular demonstration of their belief in his power to help and heal. The faith thus manifested was not restricted to the invalid, nor to those that bore him. It was shared

by both alike. They would not have engaged in the friendly office unless they had had faith in the probable result, nor would they have undertaken it against the will or wish of the invalid; neither would he have consented to allow himself to be conveyed, as he did, without believing in the power of him from whom he hoped relief.

V. NATURE OF FAITH, AS SEEN IN THIS TRANSACTION. Two things, the exact counterpart of each other, are the love of the Saviour and the faith of the sinner; they exactly and mutually correspond; the latter is the cheerful response to the former. The Saviour is waiting to be gracious; the sinner, in the exercise of faith, is ready to accept that grace. The Saviour offers the much-needed forgiveness; the sinner, by faith, stretches out his hand to receive the boon. The true nature of faith, moreover, is taught us here; it is not merely belief in a dogma, it is dependence on a person; it is not merely belief in a doctrine, it is reliance on a living Saviour; it is thus not only assent to a Divine testimony, it is trust in a Divine person. Accordingly, it is sometimes represented in Scripture as a coming to Christ; sometimes it is the receiving of Christ; again, it is a looking to Christ; also a fleeing to him for refuge. It is exhibited by other figures all of which imply not only implicit belief in what the Scriptures report of Christ, but actual trust in him as being all that Scripture represents him, and willing to do all that Scripture declares him to be able and willing to do.

VI. THE DISEASE AND ITS REMEDY. The sufferer was a paralytic, or rather, as St. Luke with his usual professional accuracy characterizes him more strictly, paralyzed or palsy-stricken (*παρὰ λυμῆνος*). This disease, which assumed a very aggravated form in the East, was attended with great suffering, besides leaving its victim altogether helpless. If leprosy was typical of pollution, and demoniac possession of passion, this form of disease was a type of utter prostration. The mode of cure adopted by our Lord in this case was somewhat unusual. Generally he administered relief to the body before restoring health to the soul; in the case of the paralytic the process is just the converse of this. Whether it was that sinful indulgence or evil excesses of some kind had weakened the nervous system of this man, and left him in this state of pain and prostration; or whether he felt with peculiar keenness the burden of sin pressing on his conscience; or whether some expression of penitence, though unrecorded, had escaped his lips; or whether it was only deep contrition of spirit of which our Lord alone was cognizant;—whichever of these it was, he first removed the soul disease. The expression, as recorded by St. Luke, is merely "man;" but both St. Matthew and St. Mark report the tenderer word of address, "son" or "child," more on the ground of affection than because of the youth of the sufferer; while St. Matthew alone adds the word of cheering—(*θάρσει*), "Be of good cheer"—an expression so calculated to relieve the burthened spirit and ease the aching heart.

VII. GROUND OF ENCOURAGEMENT. But the ground of this encouragement is in the words, "Thy sins are forgiven thee;" not, observe, "be forgiven thee," for *ἀφῴωνται* is not for *ἀφῴωνται*, the aorist subjunctive in a precative sense, but for *ἀφῴωνται*, perfect indicative in an affirmative sense—*have been forgiven thee*. The deed, in fact, was done, the blessing was bestowed, the sins of the man were, as the word implies, dismissed—sent away like the sins of Israel on the head of the scapegoat "into a land uninhabited," never again to return or be remembered.

VIII. HOSTILE ON-LOOKERS. In that surging crowd were some cold, unsympathetic hearts; there sat or stood there men who had come, if not as spies, yet through curiosity of a calculating, critical, sceptical kind. Not only had Galilee sent its contingent of such men from every village, but several had come all the way from the southern province, and even from its capital—an indirect evidence, by the way, of what is directly recorded by St. John of ministerial work carried on in these parts, and of attention roused by it. In the parallel portion of St. Luke where we read that "the power of the Lord was present to heal them (*αὐτοῖς*)"—that is, of course, those who sought or needed healing—there is a tolerably well-supported variant which reads the pronoun in the singular *αὐτόν* after N, B, L, E; the meaning in this case is, "the power of the Lord was in the direction of his healing," or more freely, "the power of the Lord [Jehovah] was present for his [work of] healing."

IX. A SECT AND A PROFESSION. St. Matthew and St. Mark both notice the presence of certain of the scribes. These were originally copyists, but afterwards textual critics, and subsequently expositors of the Law—in fact, the theologians of the nation. St.

Luke, however, gives us the additional information that "there were Pharisees and doctors of the Law sitting by." The latter had to do with the Law of the Old Testament, just as the scribes, but in the capacity of jurists. Hence the lawyers and scribes are commonly thought to have been identical. No doubt the same person might be both—a theologian and a jurist or ecclesiastical lawyer; while the Pharisees were the formalists—the religious sect that set such store by form and ceremony. The name is derived from *parash*, to separate, and thus signifies separatists. Now, these parties reasoned the matter out in their own minds (*διαλογιζόμενοι*), and were not long in coming to a conclusion that Jesus was guilty of a blasphemous assumption of an exclusively Divine attribute.

X. THE INTERPRETATION OF THEIR THOUGHTS. It was, "Why does this fellow thus speak blasphemies?" The "this" is contemptuous, and the "thus" implies "wickedly," or "as we have heard." If, however, we accept the text of the critical editors, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, as well as that followed by the Revisers, it reads thus: "Why does this man thus speak? he blasphemeth." In the received text the plural denotes intensity, and is equivalent to "all this blasphemy;" or it refers to different expressions which they looked upon as blasphemous. It must be here observed that in Scripture language the word passes from the classical sense of speaking evil of or slandering a fellow-creature to the Hellenistic meaning of speaking impiously of God, or laying claim to a Divine attribute.

XI. DRIFT OF THEIR REASONING. "Who can forgive sins but one, that is, God, or God alone?" Such was the gist of their reasoning; the natural answer, of course, was that, unless in the exercise of delegated authority, or in a declarative sense, the thing transcended human power. God reserves to himself the power of pardon; Jesus, in his own name and by his own authority, claims to bestow forgiveness; therefore he blasphemeth, thus making himself equal to God. Both their premisses were correct and strictly logical; but the conclusion drawn from them was altogether erroneous—the very reverse of the fact. It should rather have been, not "he blasphemeth," arrogating to himself a Divine attribute, but, on the contrary, "he is truly Divine," really possessing Divine power.

XII. HELPS THEM TO THE RIGHT CONCLUSION. Our Lord knew at once and well (*ἐπινυνούς*) in his spirit their secret reasonings; for, though his soul was human, his spirit was Divine; while to the query latent in their minds, he accommodates the question which he addresses to them, as though he said, "Ye ask, What right have I to speak thus? I reply, What right have ye to reason thus? Which claim is easier to make—that of forgiving sins, or that of curing palsy?" But the nature of proof in each of the two cases is widely different: in the one case it is obvious, in the other it is obscure; in the one it is patent, in the other latent. But our Lord proceeds to put them in the position of coming to a correct conclusion. He gives them sufficient data to guide them: of what is cognizable by the senses he gives sensible proof; what is spiritual he leaves them to infer. "Up," he says to the paralytic, if we adopt the reading *ἔγειρε*, approved of by Lachmann and Tischendorf, and to be taken as a particle of excitement, like *ἀγε* or *ἀνα*, or *auf* in German, rather than with *σεντον* understood; or "Arise," if we read *ἔγειρον*, with Tregelles; or "Arise at once," if we adhere to *ἔγειραι* of the received text, though Fritzsche affirms that the middle voice signifies "to arouse or raise some one for one's self," while the passive is "to be aroused, raised up," and so "rise." Our Lord then adds, "Take up thy bed" (*κράββατον*, equivalent to the Latin *grabatum*, and equivalent to St. Luke's *κλινίδιον*, little bed, or mattress or pallet—every way appropriate, as well in sense as because the latter evangelist wrote for the Greeks, as St. Mark for the Romans, at least in the first instance), "and go into thy house."

XIII. STRANGE CONTRAST. Immediately the command was obeyed, and the man, who was carried on a bed by four into the Saviour's presence was now raised up (*ἡγέρθη*), and carried his bed on his back in presence of them all. As Bengel has finely expressed it, "Sweet saying! the bed hath borne the man: now the man bore the bed."

XIV. POWER OF FORGIVENESS. Thus our Lord, by this visible, palpable, and undeniable exercise of Divine power in relieving the body, proved that he possessed the power, and not only the power but the legitimate authority (*ἐξουσίαν*), to restore the soul from the disease of sin.

XV. THIS POWER POSSESSED ON EARTH. Of himself he appears as the "Son of man."

This designation he applies no less than eighty times to himself; but it is only twice or thrice so applied by others, and in each instance of such application his exaltation is implied. He affirms that on earth the Son of man has power to forgive sins, how much more in heaven? In his humiliation, how much more in his exaltation? In his humiliation on earth, how much more in his glorification in heaven?

XVI. GOD GLORIFIED. No wonder the man himself, as St. Luke tells us, glorified God! And no wonder that the multitude (οἱ ὄχλοι according to St. Matthew, *ndvras* according to St. Mark) all likewise united with him in giving glory to God; while all, at the same time that they glorified God, expressed their own amazement in one way or other—some (as in St. Matthew) in reference to such power given unto men; others (according to St. Luke) because of the strange things—things beyond expectation (*παράδοξα*)—they had just seen; and some (as we read in St. Mark) because they had never seen it on this fashion.—J. J. G.

Vers. 13—22. Parallel passages: Matt. ix. 9—17; Luke v. 27—39.—*Call of Levi, Feasting, and Fasting.* 1. **THE CALL OF LEVI.** 1. *Publicans, who were they?* The publicans proper, who paid a certain sum contracted for into the public treasury (*publicum*), were Roman knights, a wealthy class of citizens. These, again, had their agents who sublet, or acted as their own agents in subletting, the collection of the taxes, usually to natives of the country from which the taxes were to be collected. The correct name of these tax-collectors was *portitores*. 2. *Objects of public odium.* No class of men was so obnoxious to the Jews. They were looked on as unpatriotic, because they were in the service of a foreign government; they were regarded as irreligious, because they were engaged in an occupation suggestive of subjection to alien rule, and so derogatory to the high position of that people whom God had chosen for his peculiar possession and honoured with special privileges; in addition to all this, they were generally extortioners who by unjust exactions oppressed their countrymen. Thus regarded as traitors to their country and as apostates from the national faith, while at the same time they were exorbitant in their demands on their fellow-citizens, they were not without some reason subjects of odium and obloquy—men who had thus lost caste, both social and religious. 3. *St. Matthew originally a publican.* To this obnoxious class of men belonged the son of Alphaeus, called Levi by St. Mark and St. Luke, but in the first Gospel named Matthew, which means “gift of Jehovah,” nearly the same as Theodore, or Dositheus or Dorotheus, in Greek. That Levi was identical with the evangelist Matthew scarcely admits of any reasonable doubt. Busily employed in this obnoxious trade, he sat one day as usual at the custom-house or place of toll on the shore of the Lake of Gennesaret. 4. *His call.* Capernaum, now, as we have seen, probably *Tell Hum*, was then a busy mart of merchandise and a commercial centre, whence roads diverged, one to Damascus in the north-east; a second to Tyre in the north-west on the Mediterranean seaboard; a third ran southward to Jerusalem, the capital of the country; while a fourth led to Sepphoris or Dio-Cæsarea, the Roman capital of the province. It was exactly the kind of place where one would expect to find a custom-house for collecting the tolls of the lake, harbour dues, and duties on exports and imports, or other taxes. As our Lord went past, he fixed his eyes on (St. Luke, *ἐθεώρειτο*, equivalent to observed) the tax-gatherer, who sat as usual at his post, not slothful in his business such as it was, and addressed to him the plain, direct invitation, “Follow me.” Strange to say, that simple utterance had more than magic effect on this once unscrupulous, perhaps hardened custom-house officer. We are far from affirming that this was the first time that Levi had come in contact with Jesus. Gospel light had shined through all that once dark district; there can be little doubt that he had heard some of his discourses and listened to the gracious words that so often fell from his lips, or he had witnessed some of those works of wonder which he performed. Perhaps he had mingled in that crowd of the Capernaumites, which St. Mark reports in the preceding section of his Gospel, and had been a silent spectator when the poor paralytic had been so benefited and blessed in both body and soul. 5. *His love to Jesus.* Be this as it may, he, at all events, immediately accepted the invitation, and without demur or delay rose up at once—*left all*, as St. Luke tells us—and followed Jesus. Nor was this all; he shows his love to Jesus in another way—by an entertainment given in his honour. He made a great feast in his own house, as St. Luke further informs us. From this circumstance we naturally infer

that his means were respectable; that, if not very wealthy, he was at least in comfortable circumstances; that by consequence the sacrifice he made for the Master was very considerable, and that his attachment was proportionately great. 6. *Further object of Levi's feast.* This complimentary feast to the Saviour was at the same time a farewell feast to his former associates, and a feast, moreover, by which he brought them into close contact with all that was spiritually good, in hope, no doubt, that they too might share the benefit and enjoy some measure of the same blessing which he himself had received. 7. *His humility.* Besides the self-sacrificing generosity of Levi who, no doubt, assumed the name of Matthew on his conversion, and his love to the Saviour as also to the souls of his brethren, he manifests a beautiful humility and an entire absence of ostentation. Acting on this principle, "Let another praise thee and not thine own lips," he makes no mention of the feast, more especially of the fact that it was himself, *in his own house* (so St. Luke), that gave at his own expense this great feast or reception (*δοχὴν μεγάλην*), as St. Luke terms it; while in the list of the names of the twelve apostles St. Matthew alone, in his Gospel, speaks of himself as *the publican*. 8. *A seeming tautology.* In the fifteenth verse of this second chapter there appears to be a redundancy, for first we read that *many* publicans and sinners sat at meat, or reclined (*συνανέκειντο*), with Jesus and his disciples; and then it is added, "for there were *many*, and they followed him." This seeming tautology is partially avoided by the reading *of* *καὶ* of codex D, or by the rendering *quit* of the Italic and Vulgate; while some understand the first part of the clause as a justification of the former statement about "many publicans and sinners," and a further affirmation of its being literally and exactly true, the expression "followed" being joined, as is done by some editors, to the next verse, that is, "And there followed him also scribes and Pharisees." These expedients are unnecessary, for if we take *ἦσαν* in the sense of *παρῆσαν*, which it sometimes has, the words assign an appropriate reason, or account properly for the large number referred to; thus, "Many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples, for many were present [*i.e.* in Levi's house], and had followed Jesus [*viz.* thither]." 9. *Exception taken to such company.* "How is it that he eateth with publicans and sinners?" rather, "Why is it that he consorts with such?" the full expression being *τί ἐστίς ἐστι, or τί γέγονεν ἐστι* as in John xiv. 22. This complaint was addressed to the disciples, as though these separatists and sectaries still stood in salutary awe of the Master himself; but Jesus heard or *overheard* it, if the reading *παπακούσας* be admissible, and made reply by the aphorism, "They that are whole or strong," according to St. Matthew and St. Mark, but more precisely and perhaps professionally, according to St. Luke, "in sound health (*ὀψαλόντες*)" have no need of the physician. He then applies the maxim to the particular case before him in the words, "I came not to call righteous [persons] but sinners to repentance." 10. *The objects of the Saviour's mission.* Theophylact understands by "the righteous" here those who think or speak of themselves as righteous, and imagines that our Lord terms them so by way of irony (*κατ' εἰρωνείαν*). This explanation of Theophylact, and others who hold with him, that by "righteous" in this passage are meant those who think themselves righteous, who are so in their own estimation, presents only one aspect of the matter. While there are many degrees in unrighteousness, self-righteousness is but one of those degrees, and, as such, is not a characteristic of the class, *viz.* the righteous which our Lord excludes from the objects of his mission. The meaning is rather that, as there is none by nature righteous—none righteous till made so by the Saviour himself, none really and perfectly righteous—the unrighteous (and all in their natural state are such, notwithstanding certain differences in degree); the sinful (and all belong to this category, for all have sinned though in varying grades)—these are the very objects of his search and saving power. In a word, the morally unhealthy are those on whom the skill of the great Physician needs to be exercised, and who most require its exercise. Those that are such and feel themselves to be such are just the persons contemplated in his mission, and to whom on his errand of mercy he comes and calls. 11. *The Saviour's proper place.* Instead, then, of going out of his way, or his presence being found in the wrong place, our Lord, in consorting with publicans and sinners—sinners the vilest and the worst, as the objectors at least esteemed them—was just among those lost ones whom he came to seek and save, those sorely diseased ones whom he meant to restore to spiritual health and moral vigour. As in a hospital or lazar-house the physician's work is most abundant, so among such

moral lazars the great Physician found the widest field of operation. We may not forget, however, that it is with much caution and certain restrictions that any mere man can so have intercourse with the degraded of his species; but Jesus, the God-man, ran no risk of moral taint, or of compromising character by associating freely and fully with such.

II. FASTING. 1. *Fasting.* In the former case just considered, the objectors shrank from directly assailing our Lord; they only took the disciples to task. Now, however, they have waxed bolder, and they attack the Master himself. The disciples of John imbibed the ascetic spirit of their master, who came neither eating nor drinking; the Pharisees, in addition to the one great annual fast appointed to be held on the Day of Atonement, and the four annual fasts observed after the Exile and enumerated by Zech. viii. 18 as "the fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth" (held in the same month, and probably the same as that on the Day of Atonement), observed also the two weekly fasts which superstition or will-worship had superadded, namely, Thursday, the day on which, as was alleged, Moses reascended the mount, and Monday, on which he returned. Holding a common principle, the disciples of John and the Pharisees make common cause, and question our Lord about the laxity of his disciples in this regard—not fasting, while they themselves were so strict in such observances. 2. *The true nature of fasting.* This is made manifest by our Lord's reply. Nor do we find any new doctrine here; it is the restatement of an old truth or rather principle. As rending the garments was a token of grief, so fasting was at once an effect and evidence of grief. But if the reality were absent, the former was meaningless and the latter hypocritical; hence the prophet warned his countrymen to rend their hearts and not their garments, and turn truly unto the Lord. So here the disciples of Jesus had not as yet any cause of grief. Why, then, indulge in empty pretence, employing the sign when the thing signified was absent, and when, in fact, no occasion existed for either, and when from the time and the circumstances both were uncalled for? 3. *Allusion to an ancient custom.* John the Baptist had spoken (John ii. 29) of Jesus as the Church's Bridegroom; our Lord accepts the name John thus gave him, and adopts the figure, identifying himself with the bridegroom. In "the children of the bridechamber" we have an expression of Hebraistic impress, and equivalent to the more classical *παράνυμφος* or *νυμφάριος*, who were the friends of the bridegroom—the groomsmen—and who sat or went beside him to fetch the bride, and conduct her from her home, with merry music, gay procession, bright torches, and festive joy, to the house of her husband. Thus we read, in Judg. xiv. 10, 11, "So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do. And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him." The allusion makes the meaning manifest. "Can," asks our Lord by a particle (*μή*) which usually implies a negative answer, "the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?" The answer was obvious. The presence of the bridegroom made it a time of feasting instead of fasting—of joy and not of grief; and so he returns answer to himself, "As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast." Here the ancient Syriac Version omits this clause altogether, and substitutes for it the bare negative "no," as our Lord's reply to his own question. 4. *Our Lord's first intimation of his sufferings.* Yet he points to a time suited to fasting, and we can well imagine how a cloud shaded his benignant brow as he pronounced the darkly ominous words: "But," he says, "days shall come, yea, days when" (such is the import of the *καὶ τότε* of St. Luke) "the bridegroom shall be taken away from them; then will they fast in those days." The Revised Version renders perhaps more simply, though somewhat less significantly, we think, as follows:—"But the days will come; and when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, then will they fast in those days." This is the first public intimation which our Lord gives of his future sufferings and death. He had indeed enigmatically hinted it to the Jewish rulers in the words, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John ii. 19); and he had dimly alluded to it in his private conversation with Nicodemus in the words, "Even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John iii. 14). When that gloomy prospect should be realized, then it would be a time of real grief and consequently a suitable season for fasting. 5. *Maxim teaching the avoidance of things incongruous.* Our Lord takes occasion, from the notion of persons indulging sorrow when the occasion

was festive and joyous, to enunciate a maxim of deep import and great significance, as also of far-reaching tendency and manifold applications. The new patch on an old garment is a sample of incongruity. The words in St. Mark read thus: "No man also seweth a piece of unfilled cloth on an old garment: else the new patch [or new piece that filled it up] taketh away *something* from the old, and the rent becomes worse;" or the second clause may be rendered as follows: "Else the patch [or piece that filled up] takes away the new from the old." Also in the Gospel of St. Luke the words as commonly read are, "No man putteth a piece of new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was *taken* out of the new agreeth not with the old;" or if the reading (*σχισας*) of \aleph , \mathbf{A} , \mathbf{B} , \mathbf{D} , \mathbf{L} , $\mathbf{\Xi}$, and the Syriac be adopted, the rendering may be, "No man having rent a piece from a new garment putteth it upon an old; if otherwise, he will both rend the new garment [*i.e.* by taking the *ἐπίβλημα*, or patch, out of it] and the piece from the new garment will not agree with the old." The word "unfilled," used by St. Mark, makes the meaning plainer, and implies that the unfilled patch, from its nature being stronger or more liable to shrink, works the mischief. 6. *Ill effects of such incongruity.* The following ill effects are produced:—(1) The new garment is marred and rendered incomplete; (2) the old is not made better, but worse, the rent becoming larger; (3) the entire want of suitability or consistency; in other words, obvious unseemliness, as well as unsuitability. The Latins called a man "inept" (*ineptus*) who neglected what time, place, or circumstances demanded. Even a thing which may be proper enough in itself, if done out of season, is spoiled. On the contrary, everything that God makes is beautiful in its season; and everything that man does should aim at and imitate the same. Thus is it also when the proper requirements of place, and those of circumstances, are neglected. 7. *Variety of applications.* This parable or proverbial representation is capable of a great variety of applications, all showing the necessity of duly attending to the fitness of things and the exceedingly inconvenient consequences sure to result from the opposite course. (1) The old dispensation and the new may not be mixed up together. Though they were one in essence, and though one vital principle pervaded them, yet the externals differed—the outward forms were distinct. (2) The gospel was never meant to be used as a patch on the old threadbare garment of the Law. The old economy was not to be repaired in this way; it had to be renovated. The legal dispensation was not to be patched up with gospel grace. Christianity was never intended to be a patched-up Judaism; the old had served its day and died, the new came in to take its place. Nor is the new Christian life of individuals a purple patch here and there upon the old. (3) More directly still to the present instance, the young life of new discipleship was not to be forced into conjunction and so crushed into conformity with Pharisaic asceticism, nor was their moral freedom to be hampered by such unnatural and unwelcome restrictions. 8. *A close connection.* Again, as the incompatibility of fasting with a time of feasting, of sorrow with a season of gladness, is exhibited by the comparison of a wedding feast, the wedding feast naturally suggested the wedding garment, and again, by a similar association of ideas, the wine in use at a wedding. Thus, too, the garment as an outer garb refers to externals, and the wine to something internal; so the principles of true freedom infused by the gospel must burst through the narrowness of mere ceremonial swathing-bands.—J. J. G.

Vers. 23—28. Parallel passages: Matt. xii. 1—8; Luke vi. 1—5.—*Sabbath observance.* 1. **WORSHIP, NOT AMUSEMENT, SUITS THE SABBATH.** The common heading of this section in the Gospels is, "The disciples pluck the ears of corn on the sabbath day." On this occasion our Lord and his disciples were out walking on the sabbath; but they were not walking for pleasure or even for health. They were on their way to the house of God, as we learn from the parallel passage in St. Matthew, where we read that "when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue." The two main ideas associated with the sabbath are rest and worship; the former held the first place in the old dispensation, the latter the second. In the gospel dispensation their position seems reversed; for, while never sundered and never to be separated, worship comes more to the front, holding a primary, while rest holds a secondary place. On the sabbath our Lord and his disciples attended the usual place of Jewish worship; on the sabbath the apostles, after our Lord's death and resurrection, met for the service of

God; on the sabbath, thenceforth the first day of the week, the Holy Spirit descended in Pentecostal power and plenty, while by means of St. Peter's sermon three thousand were converted that same day; on the sabbath the primitive Christians, taught by apostles and following apostolic example, met together to break bread, to read God's holy Word, or hear it preached, as also for prayer and praise, and to contribute for the necessities of the saints. Refreshment for the spirit and rest for the body went hand in hand; but worldly amusement found no place on the sabbath, and worldly pleasure formed no part of its service.

II. WORKS OF NECESSITY ALLOWABLE ON THE SABBATH. Stretches of corn-land abound in the fertile plain of Gennesaret. A pathway frequently ran through these unfenced fields, and on these pathways seed often fell and grain grew, as was the case with the wayside in the parable of the sower. Our Lord was passing by one of these, through the fields of corn (literally, *sown places*), alongside the grain. The disciples were "plucking and eating," as St. Matthew tells us, or, as St. Mark more graphically describes it, they "made a way" for themselves by plucking the stalks that had sprung up on what had previously been a path, and being an hungred, that is, in a state of hunger—for St. Matthew adds this important fact of their being hungry (*ἐνείνασον*)—"they began to rub the ears of corn in their hand," as St. Luke informs us, and thus sought to appease the cravings of appetite. This was, of course, a work of necessity, and of urgent necessity, on the part of these hungry men. They had, however, only begun this operation (*ἤρπυον*), when the Pharisees rudely checked them, administering the sharp rebuke recorded in this passage.

III. AN EXEGETICAL CONSIDERATION. The common English Version requires to make two assumptions in behoof of its rendering: 1. That *ὁδὸν ποιεῖν* is the same as *ὁδὸν ποιεῖσθαι*, though the former in reality is to make a path "*viam sternere vel munire—einen Weg machen*," as Fritzsche expresses it; while the latter is to go on one's way *iter facere* or *progredi*, which is the rendering of the Vulgate. 2. That the chief force here, as occasionally elsewhere, lies in the participle. In this way is reached (1) the usual free rendering, "His disciples began as they went to pluck the ears of corn;" but (2) the more correct translation is certainly that which is insisted on by the most accurate scholars, such as Fritzsche and Meyer, namely, "His disciples began to make a path [or way] plucking the ears." Though the Revised Version follows the ordinary rendering, it gives, in a note on this passage, an approximation to what we consider the right rendering, viz. "began to make their way plucking."

IV. THE RIGOROUS SABBATARIANISM OF THE PHARISEES. The question of the Pharisees is explained, or indeed translated, by some (1) as signifying, "Lo, what are they doing on the sabbath? That which is not lawful;" while by others it is rendered (2), "Lo, why are they doing on the sabbath what is not lawful?" In neither case can it properly mean that the thing was unlawful in itself, and still more unlawful because of its being done on the sabbath day. The superstitious sabbatarianism of the Pharisees suggests the real gist of the question. The action in itself was perfectly allowable, according to the Law as it stands written in Deut. xxiii. 25, "When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand." The Pharisees, guided by oral tradition, interpreted the law of the sabbath so rigorously as to identify the plucking of the ears with reaping, and the rubbing of them in their hands with thrashing, so that the Law, as they explained it, was violated by both operations.

V. SABBATH DESECRATION FALSELY LAID TO THE CHARGE OF THE DISCIPLES. Our Lord undertakes the vindication of his disciples; he justifies their conduct by reminding their accusers of an incident in the life of David, when ceremonial observance yielded to moral necessity, and positive precept to the requirements of mercy. The occasion was that on which David found himself at Nob, a sacerdotal town to the north-east and within sight of Jerusalem, in a state of destitution—"he had need" (*χρὲας ἔρχε*), such is the general statement; and ready to perish with hunger—"was an hungred" (*ἐνείνασεν*), this is the particular specification. The "bread of the face" or presence, according to the Hebrew, or "the loaves of proposition," as rendered by the Vulgate, were twelve loaves—one for each tribe, placed in the presence of Jehovah as a symbol of the people's dependence on their heavenly Father for daily bread. None was permitted the use of these loaves but the priests; they were their perquisite. This rigid rule was relaxed in favour

of David; and not only of David, whose eminence might be thought such as to entitle him to greater consideration, and sufficient to make his case exceptional, but in favour of those who were with him. Our Lord adduces this instance of violating the letter of the Law, asking the Pharisees, according to a formula of their own, but with scornful irony, or rather in a tone of severe reproof, "Did ye never read?" or, as it is expressed in St. Luke, "Did ye not even read this?"—ye who are such sticklers for the Law and adept in Scripture knowledge.

VI. SOLUTION OF A DIFFICULTY. The name of Abiathar instead of Ahimelech has given trouble. Of the many attempted solutions, such as in the *presence* of Abiathar, afterwards high priest, for it was Ahimelech, father of Abiathar, who really gave the shewbread to David and his men; or that he had *both names*; or that the deed was done by Ahimelech in the pontificate of Abiathar his son, as Theophylact explains it; or in the *section* or paragraph of Abiathar the high priest; or that the insertion of the article distinguishes the lifetime from the pontificate of Abiathar, according to Middleton;—of all these it must be said that they either involve error or have the appearance of mere shifts or evasions. Of them all, Middleton's is perhaps best known, and has been adopted by not a few critical scholars. Thus, in the first edition of Scrivener's 'Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament,' we find the following statement:—"In Mark ii. 26, ἐν ᾧ Ἀβ. ἀρχ., 'in the time that Abiathar was high priest,' would be historically incorrect; while ἐν ᾧ Ἀβ. τοῦ ἀρχ., 'in the days of Abiathar the high priest,' is suitable enough." But this insertion of the article is a matter of dispute, for though it is found in four respectable uncials, including A and C, as also in the following cursives:—1, 33, and 69, of which 33 is known as the "Queen of the cursives;" yet it is absent in this place from N, B, L, and many other uncials, and is rejected by most of the critical editors. We cannot, therefore, build an argument on it. We are inclined to Fritzsche's opinion, that the real removal of the difficulty appears to be effected by the position of the words ἐν ᾧ Ἀβ. ἀρχ., which implies that the transaction took place in the time of Abiathar, afterwards high priest; while ἐν ᾧ ἀρχ. Ἀβ. would restrict the occurrence to the actual time of his priesthood, though it is admitted that with a participle, as ἀρχοντας or βασιλεύοντας, for example, the position does not thus alter the sense. For the mention of Abiathar instead of Ahimelech several reasons might be assigned. He was more celebrated than his father, as also better known to the readers of Old Testament Scripture; besides, the mention of him as being present, and a consenting party to the transaction, would be calculated to obviate the possible retort which the Pharisees might otherwise make, namely, that Ahimelech paid the penalty of his profanation by his being slain.

VII. THE CHARGE OF SABBATH-BREAKING BY THE DISCIPLES FURTHER REFUTED. Additional arguments are found in the Gospel of St. Matthew to disprove the charge of sabbath profanation which these narrow, bigoted Pharisees urged against the disciples. The rather laborious service of the priests on the sabbath, in sacrificing, removing the shewbread, and other duties, was an apparent profanation of the sabbath; but in their case the Law was relaxed, or rather the principle of God's love to man, which lay at the foundation of the Law, and was the animating spirit of the Law, took precedence of the letter. He taxes them with culpable and disgraceful, if not wilful, ignorance of such a plain Scripture as "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." If, then, the necessity of David and his men prevailed over the letter of the Law; if the sabbath services of the priests made sabbath labour to some extent a duty; and if the claim of mercy be prior to and higher than that of sacrifice, our Lord claims exemption for his hungry disciples from the unbending rigour of the Law, or rather from the harsh, superstitious misinterpretation of it by those cold, heartless, cavilling, censorious Pharisees.

VIII. THE SABBATH DESIGNED TO BE SUBSERVIENT TO MAN. Our Lord proceeds to take higher ground. The sabbath was made for the sake of man, Gentile as well as Jew; it originated for his benefit; it is only the means to an end, and man's interests are that end; it owes its existence to man, and has the reason of its existence in man. It is a memorial of his creation, a remembrancer of his redemption, and a foretaste as well as pledge of his future and everlasting rest. It is most valuable in its essential nature and right use; but if the circumstantial come into collision with the essential, or the ceremonial conflict with the moral, in either case the former, in the very nature of things, is bound to give place.

IX. THE SON OF MAN'S LORDSHIP WITH RESPECT TO THE SABBATH. The Son of man here mentioned is, in spite of all rationalistic quibbling, the Saviour, and he is Lord of the sabbath. In St. Mark and St. Luke *kal* stands before "sabbath;" it is likewise inserted in St. Matthew by some, but excluded by others. It may mean *even* or *also*. In the first of these two significations it implies that much as they valued the ordinance of the sabbath above all the other commandments of the Decalogue, and superstitious as was the veneration with which they regarded it, the Son of man was Lord even of the sabbath; and so he could make it elastic as the exigencies of any particular case might require; he could modify it according to any special emergency; he could determine the mode of its observance between the two limits of man's benefit on the one hand, and the Law's behest on the other. But if we take the meaning of the copulative to be *also*, then it signifies that, amid and in addition to his other lordships, the Son of man possesses this also—that he is Lord of the sabbath day. He is Lord of angels, for they worship him; he is the Lord from heaven, and all its hosts do acknowledge him; he is Lord of earth, for by him it was made, and through him it is upheld; he is the Lord of all creation, for he is the firstborn of every creature, that in all things he should have the pre-eminence; "he is Lord *also* of the sabbath." He vindicates his law from the lax observance of the worldling or pleasure-seeker on the one hand, and from the narrowness of Pharisaic superstition on the other. He manifests its true nature for the rest and refreshment—the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual blessing of mankind.

X. THE PERPETUAL OBLIGATION OF THE SABBATH. In proof of its perpetual obligation we may refer to its Divine appointment, so long prior to the division of Adam's family into the two great sections of Jew and Gentile—before the call of Abram and the existence of the Jewish nation; before the promulgation of the Law from Sinai and the establishment of the Jewish polity. We may trace the proof of its observance in the division of time into weeks among almost all nations and from the remotest antiquity; in certain incidental notices afforded by the history of the period between creation and the publishing of the Law; in the miraculous supply of a double portion of manna, which, even before the latter event, Israel received on the sixth day as a provision for the seventh; in the note of memory prefixed, implying at once its appointment and observance before the giving of the Law, and intimating not a new enactment merely national in its range, but the republication to a particular nation of an old one, that from the beginning had been binding on all. The latitude of its extent to the Gentile stranger, as well as to the Jew, may be argued from the terms of the command itself, "Nor the stranger that is within thy gates." Some importance, too, may be attached to its central position in the Decalogue, linking together the duties we owe our Father in heaven, and those which we owe our brother man on earth; while it blends, moreover, the joint memorials of creation and Calvary, and combines at the same time the creature's comfort and the Creator's glory in the words, "To you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the Lord." We must have in recollection, besides, that it was written, as well as the other precepts of the moral law, by the finger of God on the stone tablet, in token, it would seem, of its durability. Further, we may observe the tense of the verb used in the last verse of this chapter, viz. "the Son of man *is*"—that is, continues—"Lord of the sabbath;" consequently Lord, not of an obsolete or decaying ordinance, but of a present, ever-abiding institution. Thus, indeed, it appears that "the sabbath was made for man," for the species, coeval and coextensive with the race—"for man," as has been well observed, "from the beginning; for man till the end; for man generally, at all times, in all countries, and under all circumstances." And when, we may ask, or where, or how was this original sabbath law either repealed or relaxed?—J. J. G.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

This chapter begins with the record of another case of healing on the sabbath day; and it closes with the notice of a combi-

nation of the Pharisees with the Herodians to bring about the destruction of the Saviour. We may observe that he again chose the sabbath for a new miracle, that he might again and again confute the error of the

scribes and Pharisees with regard to the observance of the sabbath.

Ver. 1.—He entered again into the synagogue. St. Matthew (xii. 9) says, “their synagogue” (*εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν αὐτῶν*). This would probably be on the next sabbath after that named at the close of the last chapter. And there was a man there which had a withered hand (*ἐξηραμμένον ἔχων τὴν χεῖρα*); literally, *which had his hand withered, or dried up*. And they watched him (*παρετήρουν αὐτόν*); *kept watching him*. There were probably scribes sent for this purpose from Jerusalem. St. Jerome informs us that, in an apocryphal Gospel in use amongst the Nazarenes and Ebionites, the man whose hand was withered is described as a mason, and is said to have asked for help in the following terms:—“I was a mason, seeking my living by manual labour. I beseech thee, Jesus, to restore to me the use of my hand, that I may not be compelled to beg my bread.” This is so far consistent with St. Mark’s description (*ἐξηραμμένον ἔχων τὴν χεῖρα*) as to show that the malady was the result of disease or accident, and not congenital. St. Luke (vi. 6) informs us that it was the right hand. The disease probably extended through the whole arm according to the wider meaning of the Greek word *χεῖρ*. It seems to have been a kind of atrophy, causing a gradual drying up of the limb; which in such a condition was beyond the reach of any mere human skill.

Ver. 2.—The scribes had already the evidence that our Lord had permitted his disciples to rub the ears of corn on the sabbath day. But this was the act of the disciples, not his. What he was now preparing to do was an act of miraculous power. And here the case was stronger, because work, which was prohibited under pain of death by the Law (Exod. xxxi. 14), was understood to include every act not absolutely necessary.

Vers. 3, 4.—Stand forth. The words in the original are *Ἐγείραι εἰς τὸ μέσον*, *Rise up into the midst*. In St. Matthew’s account (xii. 10), the scribes and Pharisees here ask our Lord, “Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?” The two accounts are easily reconciled if we first suppose the scribes and Pharisees to ask this question of our Lord, and then our Lord to answer them by putting their own question to them in another form. Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good, or to do harm? to save a life, or to kill? Our Lord’s meaning appears to be this: “If any one, having it in his power, omits to do an act of mercy on the sabbath day for one grievously afflicted, as this man is, if he is able to cure him, as I Christ am able, he does him a wrong: for he denies

him that help which he owes him by the law of charity.” Our Lord thus plainly signifies that not to do an act of kindness to a sick man on the sabbath day when you are able to do it, is really to do him a wrong. But it is never lawful to do a wrong; and therefore it is always lawful to do good, not excepting even the sabbath day, for that is dedicated to God and to good works. Whence it is a greater sin to do a wrong on the sabbath than on other days; for thus the sanctity of the sabbath is violated, just as it is all the more honoured and sanctified by doing good. In our Lord’s judgment, then, to neglect to save, when you have it in your power to do so, is to destroy. They held their peace. They could not answer him. They are obstinate indeed in their infidelity, who, when they can say nothing against the truth, refuse to say anything for it.

Ver. 5.—When he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved (*συνλυπούμενος*)—the word has a touch of “condolence” in it—at the hardening of their heart. All this is very characteristic of St. Mark, who is careful to notice the visible expression of our Lord’s feelings in his looks. The account is evidently from an eye-witness, or from one who had it from an eye-witness. He looked round about on them with anger. He was indignant at their blindness of heart, and their unbelief, which led them to attack the miracles of mercy wrought by him on the sabbath day as though they were a violation of the law of the sabbath. We see here how plainly there were in Christ the passions and affections common to the human nature, only restrained and subordinated to reason. Here is the difference between the anger of fallen man and the anger of the sinless One. With fallen man, anger is the desire of retaliating, of punishing those by whom you consider yourself unjustly treated. Hence, in other men, anger springs from self-love; in Christ it sprang from the love of God. He loved God above all things; hence he was distressed and irritated on account of the wrongs done to God by sins and sinners. So that his anger was a righteous zeal for the honour of God; and hence it was mingled with grief, because, in their blindness and obstinacy, they would not acknowledge him to be the Messiah, but misrepresented his kindnesses wrought on the sick on the sabbath day, and found fault with them as evil. Thus our Lord, by showing grief and sorrow, makes it plain that his anger did not spring from the desire of revenge. He was indeed angry at the sin, while he grieved over and with the sinners, as those whom he loved, and for whose sakes he came into the world that he might re-

deem and save them. Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth: and his hand was restored. The words "whole as the other" (*ὅτις ὡς ἡ ἄλλη*) are not found in the best uncials. They were probably inserted from St. Matthew. In this instance our Lord performed no outward act. "He spake, and it was done." The Divine power wrought the miracle concurrently with the act of faith on the part of the man in obeying the command.

Ver. 6.—The Pharisees and the Herodians combine together against the Lord. This was a terrible crisis in his history, or rather in the history of those unbelieving men. They are now in this dilemma: they must either accept his teaching, or they must take steps against him as a sabbath-breaker. But what had he done? The miracle had been wrought by a word only. It would have been difficult, therefore, to have obtained a judgment against him. Therefore they secured some fresh allies. They had already gained to their side some of the disciples of John the Baptist (ch. ii. 18), now they associate with themselves the Herodians. This is the first mention that we find made of the Herodians. They were the natural opponents of the Pharisees; but here they seem to have found some common ground of agreement, though it is not very easy to say what it was, in combining against our Lord. But it is no uncommon thing to find coalitions of men, strangely opposed to one another on most points, but united to effect some particular object; and it is easy to see how the purity and spirituality of our Lord and of his doctrine would be opposed, on the one hand, to the ceremonial formality of the Pharisee, and on the other to the worldly and secular spirit of the Herodian.

Ver. 7, 8.—Jesus with his disciples withdrew to the sea. This shows that the miracle just recorded took place in the interior of Galilee, and not at Capernaum, which was close by the sea. The chief city in Galilee at that time was Sepphoris, which Herod Antipas had made his capital. There the Herodians would of course be numerous, and so too would the Pharisees; since that city was one of the five places where the five Sanhedrime met (see Reland, 'Palestine,' p. 100, referred to in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' *in loc.*). The remainder of these two verses should be read and pointed thus: And a great multitude from Galilee followed: and from Judæa, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumæa, and beyond Jordan, and about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, hearing what great things he did, came unto him. The meaning of the evangelist is this, that, in addition to the great multitude that followed him from the parts of Galilee which he had just been

visiting, there were vast numbers from other parts who had now heard of his fame, and flocked to him from every quarter. This description sets before us in a strikingly graphic manner the mixed character of the multitude who gathered around our Lord to listen to his teaching, and to be healed by him—as many, at least, as had need of healing.

Ver. 9.—And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship (*πλοῖον*)—literally, a little boat—should wait on him (*προσκατερῇ αὐτῷ*)—literally, should be in close attendance upon him—because of the multitude, lest they should throng him. This shows in a very graphic manner how assiduously and closely the crowd pressed upon him, so that he was obliged to have a little boat always in readiness, in which he might take refuge when the pressure became too great, and so address them with greater freedom from the boat. St. Luke (v. 3) says, "He sat down, and taught the people out of the ship," making the boat, so to speak, his pulpit.

Ver. 10.—As many as had plagues—the Greek word is *μολιγας*; literally, scourges, painful disorders—pressed upon him (*ἔστε ἐπιπτεν αὐτῷ*); literally, fell upon him, clung to him, hoping that the very contact with him might heal them. This expression, "scourges," reminds us that diseases are a punishment on account of our sins.

Ver. 11.—And the unclean spirits, whenever they beheld him, fell down before him, and cried, saying. It is worthy of notice that the afflicted people fell upon him (*ἐπιπτεν αὐτῷ*); but the unclean spirits fell down before him (*προσέπιπεν αὐτῷ*), and this not out of love or devotion, but out of abject fear, dreading lest he should drive them out of the "possessed," and send them before their time to their destined torment. It is just possible that this homage paid to our Lord may have been an act of cunning—a ruse, as it were, to lead the people to suppose that our Lord was in league with evil spirits. Thou art the Son of God. Did, then, the unclean spirits really know that Jesus was the Son of God? A voice from heaven at his baptism had proclaimed him to be the Son of God, and that voice must have vibrated through the spiritual world. Then, further, they must have known him to be the Son of God by the numerous and mighty miracles which he wrought, and which they must have seen to be real miracles, such as could only have been wrought by the supernatural power of God, and which were wrought by Christ for this very purpose, that they might prove him to be the promised Messiah, the only begotten Son of God. It may, however, be observed that they did

not know this so clearly, but that, considering, on the other hand, the greatness of the mystery, they hesitated. It is probable that they were ignorant of the end and fruit of this great mystery, namely, that mankind were to be redeemed by the Incarnation, the Cross, and the Death of Christ; and so their own kingdom was to be overthrown, and the kingdom of God established. Blinded by their hatred of Jesus, whom they perceived to be a most holy Being, drawing multitudes to himself, they stirred up the passions of evil men against him, little dreaming that in promoting his destruction they were overthrowing their own kingdom.

Ver. 12.—(See notes on ch. i. 44.)

Ver. 13.—Into a mountain; literally, *into the mountain* (*eis τὸ ὄρος*). Similarly, St. Luke (vi. 12) says, "He went out into the mountain to pray." The use of the definite article might either point to some well-known eminence, or to the high table-land as distinguished from the plain, and in which there would be many recesses, which would explain the use of the preposition *eis*. Tradition indicates Mount Hatten as the place, about five miles to the west of the Sea of Galilee. The summit rises above a level space, where large numbers might stand within hearing. It is supposed, with good reason, that it was from thence that the sermon on the mount was delivered. It was at daybreak, as we learn from St. Luke (vi. 13), after this night of prayer, that he called unto him whom he himself would (*οὓς ἠθέληεν αὐτός*): and they went unto him (*καὶ ἀπηλθόν πρὸς*); literally, *they went away to him*, the word implying that they forsook their former pursuits. His own will was the motive power: he called "whom he himself would;" but their will consented. "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

Vers. 14, 15.—Out of those who thus came to him, he ordained twelve (*ἐποίησε*); literally, *he made or appointed twelve*. They were not solemnly ordained or consecrated to their office until after his resurrection. Their actual consecration (of all of them at least but one, namely, Judas Iscariot) took place when he breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John xx. 22). But from this time they were his apostles—"designate." They were henceforth to be with him as his attendants and disciples. They were to go forth and preach under his direction, and by his power they were to cast out devils. Several manuscripts add here that they were "to heal sicknesses," but the words are omitted in some of the oldest authorities. The authority over unclean spirits is more formally conveyed

later on (see ch. vi. 7), so that here St. Mark speaks by anticipation. But this shows how much importance was attached to this part of their mission; for it recognizes the spiritual world, and the special purpose of the manifestation of the Son of God, namely, that he might "destroy the works of the devil." *He appointed twelve*. The number twelve symbolizes perfection and universality. The number three indicates what is Divine; and the number four, created things. Three multiplied by four gives twelve, the number of those who were to go forth as apostles into the four quarters of the world—called to the faith of the holy Trinity.

Vers. 16, 17.—And Simon he surnamed Peter. Our Lord had previously declared that Simon should be so called. But St. Mark avoids as much as possible the recognition of any special honour belonging to St. Peter; so he here simply mentions the fact of this surname having been given to him, a fact which was necessary in order that he might be identified. All the early Christian writers held that Peter was virtually the author of this Gospel. Simon, or Simeon, is from a Hebrew word, meaning "to hear." James the son of Zebedee, so called to distinguish him from the other James; and John his brother. In St. Matthew's list, Andrew is mentioned next after Peter, as his brother, and the first called. But here St. Mark mentions James and John first after Peter; these three, Peter and James and John, being the three leading apostles. Of James and John, James is mentioned first, as the eldest of the two brothers. And then he surnamed Boanerges, which is, Sons of thunder. "Boanerges" is the Aramaic pronunciation of the Hebrew *B'ne-ragesh*; *B'ne*, sons, and *ragesh*, thunder. The word was not intended as a term of reproach; although it fitly expressed that natural impetuosity and vehemence of character, which showed itself in their desire to bring down fire from heaven upon the Samaritan village, and in their ambitious request that they might have the highest places of honour in his coming kingdom. But their natural dispositions, under the Holy Spirit's influence, were gradually transformed so as to serve the cause of Christ, and their fiery zeal was transmuted into the steady flame of Christian earnestness and love, so as to become an element of great power in their new life as Christians. Christ called these men "Sons of thunder" because he would make their natural dispositions, when restrained and elevated by his grace, the great instruments of spreading his Gospel. He destined them for high service in his kingdom. By their holy lives they were to be as lightning, and by their preaching they were to be as

thunder to rouse unbelievers, and to bring them to repentance and a holy life. It was no doubt on account of this zeal that James fell so early a victim to the wrath of Herod. A different lot was that which fell to St. John. Spared to a ripe old age, he influenced the early Church by his writings and his teaching. His Gospel begins as with the voice of thunder, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Beza and others, followed by Dr. Morison, have thought that this distinctive name was given by our Lord to the two brothers on account of some deep-toned peculiarity of voice, which was of much service to them in impressing the message of the Gospel of the kingdom upon their hearers.

Vers. 18, 19.—Andrew is next mentioned after these eminent apostles, as the first called. The word is from the Greek, and means "manly." Bartholomew, that is, Bar-tolmai, the son of Tolmay. This is a patronymic, and not a proper name. It has been with good reason supposed that he is identical with Nathanael, of whom we first read in John i. 46, as having been found by Philip and brought to Christ. In the three synoptic Gospels we find Philip and Bartholomew enumerated together in the lists of the apostles; and certainly the mode in which Nathanael is mentioned in John xxi. 2 would seem to show that he was an apostle. His birthplace, too, Cana of Galilee, would point to the same conclusion. If this be so, then the name Nathanael, the "gift of God," would bear the same relation to Bartholomew that Simon does to Bar-jona. Matthew. In St. Matthew's own list of the apostles (x. 3) the epithet "the publican" is added to his name, and he places himself after Thomas. This marks the humility of the apostle, that he does not scruple to place on record what he was before he was called. The word Matthew, a contraction of Mattathias, means the "gift of Jehovah," according to Gesenius, which in Greek would be "Theodore." Thomas. Eusebius says that his real name was Judas. It is possible that Thomas may have been a surname. The word is Hebrew meaning a twin, and it is so rendered in Greek in John xi. 16. James the son of Alphæus, or Clopas (not Cleophas); called "the Less," either because he was junior in age, or rather in his call, to James the Great, the brother of John. This James, the son of Alphæus, is called the brother of our Lord. St. Jerome says that his father Alphæus, or Clopas, married Mary, a sister of the blessed Virgin Mary, which would make him the cousin of our Lord. This view is confirmed by Bishop Pearson (Art. iii. on the Creed). He was the writer of the Epistle

which bears his name, and he became Bishop of Jerusalem. Thaddæus, called also Lebbaeus and Judas; whence St. Jerome describes him as "trionimus," i.e. having three names. Judas would be his proper name. Lebbaeus and Thaddæus have a kind of etymological affinity, the root of Lebbaeus being "heart," and of Thaddæus, "breast." These names are probably recorded to distinguish him from Judas the traitor. Simon the Canaanite. The word in the Greek, according to the best authorities, is, both here and in St. Matthew (x. 4), *Kananaïos*, from a Chaldean or Syriac word, *Kanean*, or *Kānenieh*. The Greek equivalent is *Ζηλωτής*, which we find preserved in St. Luke (vi. 15). It is possible, however, that Simon may have been born in Cana of Galilee. St. Jerome says that he was called a Cananean or Zealot, by a double reference to the place of his birth and to his zeal. Judas Iscariot. *Iscariot*. The most probable derivation is from the Hebrew *Ish-Kerioth*, "a man of Kerioth," a city of the tribe of Judah. St. John (vi. 7) describes him as the son of Simon. If it be asked why our Lord should have chosen Judas Iscariot, the answer is that he chose him, although he knew that he would betray him, because it was his will that he should be betrayed by one that had been "his own familiar friend," and that had "eaten bread with him." Dengel says well here that "there is an election of grace from which men may fall." How far our Lord knew from the first the results of his choice of Judas belongs to the profound, unfathomable mystery of the union of the Godhead and the manhood in his sacred Person. We may notice generally, with regard to this choice by our Lord of his apostles, the germ of the principle of sending them forth by two and two. Here are Peter and Andrew, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, and so on. Then, again, our Lord chose three pairs of brothers, Peter and Andrew, James and John, James the Less and Jude, that he might teach us how powerful an influence is brotherly love. We may also observe that Christ, in selecting his apostles, chose some of his kinsmen according to the flesh. When he took upon him our flesh, he recognized those who were near to him by nature, and he would unite them yet more closely by grace to his Divine nature. Three of the apostles took the lead, namely, Peter and James and John, who were admitted to be witnesses of his transfiguration, of one of his greatest miracles, and of his passion.

Vers. 20, 21.—The last clause of ver. 19, And they went into an house, should form the opening sentence of a new paragraph, and should therefore become the first clause of ver. 20, as in the Revised Version. Accord-

ing to the most approved reading, the words are (*ἔρχεται εἰς οἶκον*), *He cometh into an house, or, He cometh home*. There is here a considerable gap in St. Mark's narrative. The sermon on the mount followed upon the call of the apostles, at all events so far as it affected them and their mission. Moreover, St. Matthew interposes here two miracles wrought by our Lord after his descent from the mount, and before his return to his own house at Capernaum. St. Mark seems anxious here to hasten on to describe the treatment of our Lord by his own near relatives at this important crisis in his ministry. So that they—*i.e.* our Lord and his disciples—could not so much as eat bread; such was the pressure of the crowd upon them. St. Mark evidently records this, in order to show the contrast between the zeal of the multitude and the very different feelings of our Lord's own connections. They, his friends, when they heard how he was thronged, went out to lay hold on him; for they said, *He is beside himself*. This little incident is mentioned only by St. Mark. When his friends saw him so bent upon his great mission as to neglect his bodily necessities, they considered that he was hereof of his reason, that too much zeal and piety had deranged his mind. His friends went out (*ἐξῆλθον*) to lay hold on him. They may probably have come from Nazareth. St. John (vii. 5) says that "even his brethren did not believe on him;" that is, they did not believe in him with that fulness of trust which is of the essence of true faith. Their impression was that he was in a condition requiring that he should be put under some restraint.

Ver. 22.—The scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, *He hath Beelzebub, etc.* These scribes had apparently been sent down by the Sanhedrim, on purpose to watch him, and, by giving their own opinion upon his claims, to undermine his influence. They gave as their authoritative judgment, "He hath Beelzebub." One of the most prominent characteristics of the public works of our Lord was the expulsion of evil spirits. There was no questioning the facts. Even modern scepticism is here at fault, and is constrained to admit the fact of sudden and complete cures of insanity. So the scribes were obliged to account for what they could not deny. "He hath Beelzebub," they say; that is, he is possessed by Beelzebub, or "the lord of the dwelling," as a source of supernatural power. They had heard it alleged against him, "He hath a devil;" and so they fall in with this popular error, and give it emphasis, by saying, Not only has he a devil, but he is possessed by the chief of the devils, and therefore has authority over inferior spirits. Observe the contrast be-

tween the thoughts of the multitude and of those who professed to be their teachers, the scribes and Pharisees. The multitude, free from prejudice, and using only their natural light of reason, candidly owned the greatness of Christ's miracles as wrought by a Divine power; whereas the Pharisees, filled with envy and malice, attributed these mighty works which he wrought by the finger of God, to the direct agency of Satan.

Vers 23—27.—How can Satan cast out Satan? Observe here that our Lord distinctly affirms the personality of Satan, and a real kingdom of evil. But then he goes on to show that if this their allegation were true, namely, that he cast out devils by the prince of the devils, then it would follow that Satan's kingdom would be divided against itself. As a house divided against itself cannot stand, so neither could the kingdom of Satan exist in the world if one evil spirit was opposed to another for the purpose of dispossessing, the one the other, from the minds and bodies of men. Our Lord thus employs another argument to show that he casts out evil spirits, not by Beelzebub, but by the power of God. It is as though he said, "As he who invades the house of a strong man cannot succeed until he first binds the strong man; in like manner I, Christ Jesus, who spoil the kingdom of Satan, whilst I lead sinners who had been under his power to repentance and salvation, must first bind Satan himself, otherwise he would never suffer me to take his captives from him. Therefore he is my enemy, and not in league with me, not my ally in the casting out of evil spirits, as you falsely represent me to be. It behoves you, then, to understand that it is with the Spirit of God that I cast out devils, and that therefore the kingdom of God is come upon you."

Ver. 28.—All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, etc. St. Mark adds the words (ver. 30), "Because they said, [*ἔλεγον*, 'they were saying,'] He hath an unclean spirit." This helps us much to the true meaning of this declaration. Our Lord does not here speak of every sin against the Holy Spirit, but of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. These words of St. Mark point to a sin of the tongue more especially, although not excluding thoughts and deeds against the Holy Spirit. Observe what these scribes and Pharisees did; they cavilled at works manifestly Divine—works wrought by God for the salvation of men, by which he confirmed his faith and truth. Now, when they spoke against these, and knowingly and of malice ascribed them to the evil spirit, then they blasphemed against the Holy Ghost, dishonouring God by assigning his power to Satan. What could be more hateful than this? What greater blasphemy could

be imagined? And surely they must be guilty of this sin who ascribe the fruits and actions of the Holy Spirit to an impure and unholy source, and so strive to mar his work and to hinder his influence in the hearts of men.

Ver. 29.—Hath never forgiveness. Not that any sinner need despair of forgiveness through the fear that he may have committed this sin; for his repentance shows that his state of mind has never been one of entire enmity, and that he has not so grieved the Holy Spirit as to have been entirely forsaken by him. But is in danger of eternal damnation. The Greek words, according to the most approved reading, are ἀλλ' ἐνοχός ἐστιν αἰωνίου ἀμαρτήματος; but is guilty of an eternal sin; thus showing that there are sins of which the effects and the punishment belong to eternity. He is bound by a chain of sin from which he can never be loosed. (See St. John ix. 41, "Therefore your sin remaineth.")

Vers. 31—33.—Our Lord's brethren and his mother had now arrived (see ver. 21) to look after him. He was in the house teaching; but the crowd was so great that they could not approach him. The multitude filled not only the room, but the courtyard and all the approaches. St. Luke (viii. 19) says, "they could not come at him for the crowd." His brethren here spoken of were in all probability his cousins, the sons of Mary, the wife of Alphæus or Clopas. But two of these, already chosen to be apostles, were most likely with him in the room, and of the number of those towards whom he stretched out his hand and said, "Behold, my mother and my brethren!" whilst Mary and the others had come (Mary, perhaps, induced by the others in the hope that the sight of his mother might the more move him) for the purpose of bringing him back to the quiet of Nazareth. We cannot suppose that the Virgin Mary came with any other feeling than that of a mother's anxiety in behalf of her Son. She may have thought that he was in danger, exposed to the fickle temper of a large multitude, who might at any moment have their passions stirred against him by

his enemies, the scribes and Pharisees; and so she was willingly persuaded to come and use her influence with him to induce him to escape from what appeared evidently to be a position of some danger. If so, this explains our Lord's behaviour on this occasion. The multitude was sitting about him, and he was teaching them; and then a message was brought to him from his mother and his brethren who were without, perhaps in the courtyard, perhaps beyond in the open street, calling for him. The interruption was untimely, not to say unseemly. And so he says, not without a little tone of severity in his words, Who is my mother and my brethren? Our Lord did not speak thus as denying his human relationship; as though he was not "very man," but a mere "phantom," as some early heretics taught; and still less as though he was ashamed of his earthly relationships; but partly perhaps because the messengers too boldly and inconsiderately interrupted him while he was teaching; and chiefly that he might show that his heavenly Father's business was more to him than the affection of his earthly mother, greatly as he valued it; and thus he preferred the spiritual relationship, in which there is neither male nor female, bond nor free, but all stand alike to Christ in the relationship of brother, sister, and mother. It is remarkable, and yet the reason for the omission is obvious, that our Lord does not mention "father" in this spiritual category.

Ver. 34.—Looking round on them (περιβλεψόμενος) which sat round about him. Here is one of the graphic touches of St. Mark, reproduced, it may be, from St. Peter. Our Lord's intellectual and loving eye swept the inner circle of his disciples. The twelve, of course, would be with him, and others with them. His enemies were not far off. But immediately about him were those who constituted his chosen ones. As man, he had his human affections and his earthly relationships; but as the Son of God, he knew no other relatives but God's children, to whom the performance of his will and the promotion of his glory are the first of all duties and the dominant principle of their lives.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The withered hand.* This incident serves to bring out the antagonism between the spiritual and benevolent ministry of the Lord Jesus, and the formalism, self-righteousness, and hard-heartedness of the religious leaders of the Jews. It serves to explain, not only the enmity of the Pharisees, but their resolve to league with whosoever would help them in carrying out their purposes and plot against the very life of the Son of man. It serves to exhibit the mingled feelings of indignation and of pity with which Jesus regarded his enemies, whose hatred was directed, not only against his person, but against his works of mercy and healing. But the incident shall here be treated as a symbol of man's need and of Christ's authority and method as man's Saviour.

I. THE CONDITION OF THIS MAN IN THE SYNAGOGUE IS A SYMBOL OF THE STATE AND NEED OF MAN. He was a man "with a withered hand." 1. *The hand is the symbol of man's practical nature.* The husbandman, the mechanic, the painter, the musician, every craftsman of every grade, makes use of the hand in executing works of art or fulfilling the task of toil. The right hand may be regarded as the best bodily emblem of our active, energetic nature. It is our lot, not only to think and to feel, but to will and to do. 2. *The withering of the hand is symbolical of the effect of sin upon our practical nature.* As this man was rendered incapable of pursuing an industrial life, so the victim of sin is crippled for holy service, is both indisposed and incapacitated for Christian work. The withering of muscle, the paralysis of nerve, is no more disastrous to bodily effort than the blighting and enfeebling power of sin is destructive of all holy acceptable service unto God. 3. *The apparent hopelessness of this man's case is an emblem of the sinner's hopeless state.* This unhappy person was probably condemned by his misfortune to poverty, privation, neglect, and helplessness. He was aware of the inability of human skill to cure him. The case of the sinner is a case of inability and sometimes of despondency. Legislation and philosophy are powerless to deal with an evil so radical and so unmanageable. Unless God have mercy, the sinner is undone!

II. THE MIRACULOUS ACTION OF CHRIST SYMBOLIZES ONE ASPECT OF HIS REDEMPTIVE WORK. And this in two respects: 1. *He saves by the imputation of power.* Christ in the synagogue spoke with authority, both when addressing the spectators who cavilled, and when addressing the sufferer who doubtless welcomed his aid. Power accompanied his words—power from on high; healing virtue went forth from him. How grateful should we be that, when the Son of God came to earth with power, it was with power to heal and bless! He is "mighty to save." There was power in his person and presence, power in his words and works, power in his example and demeanour, power in his love and sacrifice. When he saves, he saves from sin and from sin's worst results. The spiritual inefficiency and helplessness, which is man's curse, gives place to a heavenly energy and activity. The redeemed sinner finds his right hand of service whole, restored, vigorous. Under the influence of new motives and new hopes, he consecrates his renewed nature of activity to the Lord who saved him. 2. *He saves with the concurrence of human effort.* Observe that the Lord Jesus addressed to this sufferer two commands. He bade him "Stand forth!" which he *could* do; and "Stretch forth thy hand!" which he *could not* do—or at least might, judging from the past, have felt and believed himself unable to do. Yet he believed that the Prophet and Healer, who spoke with such authority, and who was known to have healed many, was not uttering idle words. His faith was called forth, and his will was exercised. Without his obedience and concurrence, there is no reason to suppose that he would have been healed. So every sinner who would be saved by Christ must recognize the Divine authority of the Saviour, must avail himself of the Saviour's compassion, and in humble faith must obey the Saviour's command. It is not, indeed, faith which saves. It is Christ who saves, but he saves through faith; for it is by faith that the sinner lays hold upon the Saviour's might, and comes to rejoice in the Saviour's grace.

APPLICATION. 1. The first requisite for a sinner who would be saved is clearly to see, and deeply to feel, his need and helplessness. 2. The next requisite is to come into the presence of the Divine Saviour. 3. Yet again, it is requisite to exercise faith in him who is mighty and willing to save. 4. And every healed and restored sinner should consecrate all his active powers to the service of his Redeemer.

Vers. 6—12.—Persecution and popularity. The evangelist represents, in very graphic language, the crisis in the ministry of Jesus now reached. We learn what was the attitude towards Jesus, both of the populace and of the ruling classes. We see the scribes and Pharisees meeting with the Herodians, and plotting against the Benefactor of mankind. We see the multitudes thronging from every quarter to look upon, to listen to, the far-famed Prophet of Nazareth. It is a striking contrast. It may be to us an earnest of what was to come; of the malice that slew the Lord of glory, and of the praise that should encompass him from all lands; of the cross, and of the throne.

I. WE HAVE A PICTURE OF OUR LORD'S POPULARITY. 1. This passage furnishes the

evidence of our Lord's popularity. The people left their cities and villages, their homes and occupations, in order to follow Jesus. From various parts of the province of Galilee, through which he had just been travelling upon an evangelistic tour, the people flocked to the neighbourhood of the lake. They came also from Jerusalem and Judæa, where successive miracles had made his name and person familiar to the inhabitants of the metropolis. Not only so, but from the east side of the Jordan, and Idumæa; and (strangest of all) from Phœnicia, far away in the north-west, multitudes, attracted by the great Prophet and Physician, found their way to Gennesaret. It is plain that an immense impression had been created by the ministry of our Lord, that he was becoming the chief figure in the land, succeeding to the prominence and the popularity of John the Baptist. 2. This same passage brings before us the *grounds* of our Lord's popularity. Wherever he had gone, he had so acted as to justify the name he gave himself, "the Son of man;" he had shown himself the universal Saviour and Friend. Some came grateful for healing virtue and for pardoning mercy, having themselves tasted and seen that the Lord was good. Some brought to him the maladies of themselves or their friends, hoping to experience his grace. The unclean spirits came, confessing him to be the Son of God, acknowledging his regal authority, prepared to flee at his bidding and to leave the sufferers free. Some came to see him of whom such great and delightful tidings had been spread abroad; and others hoping that they might witness some illustrations of his saving might. His ministry of teaching attracted some, and the sequel tells us how richly such were rewarded by the incomparable discourses which were delivered at this period of Christ's career. And there were, doubtless, some few noble, devout, and ardent souls, who longed for the revelation of a spiritual kingdom, which should fulfil the promises of God and realize the ancient and prophetic visions. 3. The *consequences* of Christ's popularity are no less clearly related. It is plain that at this period our Lord was quite embarrassed by the excitement and eagerness of the crowds who thronged around him. It was this embarrassment that led him, first to withdraw to the lake, and then to request that a boat might be in readiness to receive him from the pressure of the crowd, and, if necessary, to take him to the near seclusion of the eastern shore. It was this embarrassment also which led him to direct those who partook of the benefit of his compassion to refrain from celebrating his praise, and even to keep silence concerning what he had done for them. 4. But let us bear in mind that this popularity was but superficial. Jesus knew well that most who followed him did so either from curiosity or with selfish desires of benefiting from his ministry. He was not deceived by the popular interest and acclaim. He was aware that at any moment the tide might turn. At Nazareth it was proved how ungrateful and violent the people could be when once their passions were roused or their prejudices crossed. And his ministry closed amidst the clamour and the execration of the fickle multitude, upon whose minds the arts of crafty priests and politicians played, as the storm-wind plays upon the surface of the mighty sea.

II. WE HAVE A PICTURE OF OUR LORD'S PERSECUTORS, THEIR PLOTS AND PROJECTS. At the very time that multitudes were openly thronging around Christ, there was secret consultation among men of position and influence as to the means of effecting his ruin. We observe the *occasion* of this hostile attitude and action. For a while there had been no opposition, but rather a general interest and expectation. The change seems to have come about as a consequence of the violation by the Lord Jesus of the customs and traditions of the ceremonial rabbis or scribes. There were deep-seated *reasons* for the hostility cherished against the Prophet of Nazareth by the religious leaders—scribes and Pharisees. 1. His *conduct towards the common people* was a grave offence. The rabbis generally held the unlearned and lower class in great contempt; in their esteem those who knew not the Law were cursed. They would not associate with them or touch them. Now, the Lord Jesus made himself at home with all classes, and accepted invitations, not only from rulers and scholars, but from publicans, at whose table he met the worldly and the sinful. He even chose one from the despised class of tax-collectors to occupy a place among his own immediate friends and followers. He ate and drank with publicans and sinners, and, when he preached, encouraged such to draw near to him. "The common people heard him gladly." That an acknowledged rabbi should act in such a way was a scandal in the view of the self-righteous and ceremonious; it was conduct likely to lower the learned in the general

esteem, to bring religion and the profession of the scribes into contempt. 2. We gather from the Gospel record that the chief cause of complaint against Jesus was his *neglect and violation of the ceremonial Law*. This Law was to the rabbis the breath of their nostrils; and our Lord and his disciples, doubtless under his influence, were very negligent of the observances upon which the ruling class laid such stress. The Pharisees fasted, Jesus feasted; the Pharisees performed innumerable ablutions, Jesus ate bread "with unwashen hands." 3. *The sabbath* was, however, the most important point of difference. Many of the rigid Jewish religionists held the most narrow opinions and cherished the most absurd and ridiculous scruples with regard to what was lawful and what unlawful upon the weekly day of rest. It was not possible that Jesus, with his views as to the spirituality of worship and as to the nature of holiness, should agree with these petty and childish notions; it was not possible that he should do other than violate traditional rules and shock formal prejudices. He encouraged his disciples to pluck and eat corn on the sabbath; he performed cures upon the day which he held to be made for man; he directed those who were healed to take up their couch and return home. In all these respects he both vindicated religious liberty and asserted himself "Lord of the sabbath." The rigid ceremonialism and ritualism of the rabbis was offended, alike with the superiority which the Lord claimed over all rules, and with the disdain he showed for their usages and traditions. They hated him, as narrow and formal religionists of all schools ever hate the teachers who place religion in the heart rather than in ceremonies and creeds, and who proclaim that newness of life is the one acceptable offering and sacrifice in the sight of the Divine Searcher of hearts. 4. Our Lord's *treatment of the scribes and Pharisees* was itself a cause of offence, an occasion of their enmity to him. Instead of treating them with deference, he defied their judgment; and (at a later period of his ministry) uttered denunciations and woes upon them for their hypocrisy. When about to heal the withered hand, Jesus "looked round about on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their heart." It was not thus that they were wont to be regarded and treated. If this treatment were continued, their influence must be undermined. 5. The cause of hostility just mentioned was a symptom of a deeper difference between Jesus and the rabbis: *the spiritual quality of his teaching* was such as to conflict with all their notions of religion. With them religion was an affair of the outward life alone; with him it was, first and foremost, an affair of the heart. And even with respect to outward actions there was this great difference: the rabbis thought of the attitude of prayer, Christ of the feeling and desire; the rabbis thought much of tithes and fasts, of sacrifices and services, Christ of the weightier matters of the Law; the rabbis thought much of what went as food into the man, Christ of the thoughts which expressed themselves in moral conduct. Observe the feeling that was aroused in the breasts of the Pharisees. Luke tells us "they were filled with madness," i.e. carried away by violent rage and hostility. What a revelation of human iniquity! The actions of the holy and gracious Redeemer excite the fury of those he came to benefit and save! And the hostility then felt grew and gathered as the months passed on, until it culminated in the successful plot against the Holy One and Just. Such feeling did not evaporate in words; it led to action. The enemies of Jesus retired to deliberate, to plot. There was more than indignation; there was malice, a resolve to avenge themselves upon One too holy, too authoritative, for them to bear with him. An unnatural alliance was formed between the rabbis, who represented the principles of rigid Judaism both in nationality and in religion; and the Herodians, who seem to have been Sadducees in religion, and in politics supporters of the house of Herod, and accordingly advocates of all possible independence upon Rome. It is not easy to understand this league. The Herodians themselves may not so much have hated Jesus as, from political motives, they desired to gain the favour of the powerful Pharisaic party, whose influence with the people generally was great, and who might be made the means of strengthening the supporters of Antipas. The aim which these confederates set before them was atrocious indeed; it was nothing less than the destruction of Jesus. Answer his reasoning they could not. Equally unable were they to find fault with his irreproachable character, his benevolent actions. Their only weapons were slander and craft and violence. How to work upon the fears of the secular authorities and the passions of the populace—this was their aim and endeavour.

Vers. 13—19.—The twelve. Some of these twelve had been “called” by the Master long ago, and had already been much in his company. Others had been, for a shorter time and less intimately, associated with him. This formal appointment and commission took place upon the mount, and immediately before the delivery of the ever-memorable sermon to the disciples and the multitude. The passage is suggestive of great general truths.

I. CHRIST THOUGHT FIT TO EMPLOY HUMAN AGENTS IN THE PROMULGATION OF HIS RELIGION. That he might have dispensed with all created agency, that he might have employed angelic ministers, we cannot doubt. But in becoming man—“the Son of man”—he contracted human sympathies and relationships, and undertook to work, with a Divine power indeed, yet by human means.

II. CHRIST SELECTED HIS AGENTS BY VIRTUE OF HIS OWN WISDOM AND AUTHORITY. He called “whom he himself would.” The Lord Jesus is the absolute Monarch in his own kingdom. Having perfect knowledge, unerring wisdom, and unfailing justice, he is fitted for supreme, unshared rule.

III. CHRIST CHOSE HIS TRUSTED APOSTLES FROM A LOWLY POSITION OF SOCIETY. Only one of the band—and he the unworthy member—was from Judæa. All the others were Galileans; and the inhabitants of this northern province were comparatively rude, unlettered, unpolished. Some rabbis would fain have been received into the number, but the Lord would not encourage them. He preferred to deal with unsophisticated natures. Perhaps James and John and Levi were in fair circumstances; the rest were in all likelihood poor. The twelve were, in education, very different from such men as Luke and Paul. Christ chose, as he has often done since, “the weak things of the world to confound the mighty.” He rejoiced and gave thanks because things, hidden from the wise and prudent, had been revealed unto babes.

IV. CHRIST APPOINTED AGENTS WITH VARIOUS GIFTS, QUALIFICATIONS, AND CHARACTER. The three leaders among the apostles were certainly men of ability. Peter’s vigour of style was only one index to the great native force of his character; James was slain by Herod, as probably the most prominent representative of the early Christian community; and John’s writings show him to have been both profound and imaginative as a thinker. Of the other apostles, James the Less was certainly a man of inflexible will and of vigorous administrative power. In disposition these twelve men differed marvellously from one another. Two were “sons of thunder,” another—Thomas—was of a doubting, melancholy spirit, and Simon was ardent and impulsive. All but Iscariot were deeply attached to Jesus, and it was not without purpose that one avaricious and treacherous person was included in the number. What various instruments our Lord employs for accomplishing his own work!

V. CHRIST RECOGNIZED AND EMPLOYED THE SPECIAL GIFTS OF HIS DISCIPLES IN HIS OWN SERVICE. This passage brings this truth vividly before us. Simon was surnamed “The Rock”—a title to which his character especially entitled him; and the sons of Zebedee were designated “Sons of Thunder,” doubtless from their ardent, impetuous zeal in the service of the Lord. There was a special work corresponding to the special endowments of each.

VI. CHRIST QUALIFIED THESE AGENTS BY KEEPING THEM IN HIS OWN SOCIETY AND BENEATH HIS OWN INFLUENCE. “That they might be with him.” How simple, yet how profound these words! What a Companion! What lessons were to be learned from his character, his demeanour, his language, his mighty works! Nothing could so qualify these men for the service of coming years as this brief period of daily and close intimacy with a Being so gracious, so holy, so wise.

VII. CHRIST HIMSELF COMMISSIONED AND AUTHORIZED THESE AGENTS. They were to be “sent forth;” hence their designation, “apostles.” They were to be his messengers, his heralds, his ambassadors. And what was their ministry? 1. To preach, to publish good tidings of salvation, righteousness, eternal life, through Christ. To this end it was evidently necessary that they should imbibe the Master’s spirit, as well as know the Teacher’s doctrine. It was necessary that, in due time, they should be witnesses of his resurrection and partakers of the Spirit poured out from on high. 2. To have authority to cast out demons, to carry on the work of the Lord, and to contend with the kingdom of Satan, and establish the reign of Christ, of light, of righteousness, of peace.

APPLICATION. 1. Christ's first call is to discipleship. We must first learn that we may teach; obey and serve that we may guide and aid others. 2. We are summoned to consecrate all our gifts and acquirements to the service and cause of Immanuel. 3. It is the highest honour and the purest happiness to be employed by Christ as his agents. 4. It is necessary to be much with Christ in order that we may be fitted efficiently to work for Christ.

Vers. 20—30.—Blasphemy. Great men are often misunderstood by reason of their very greatness. Aims higher than those of others need other methods than such as are commonly employed by ordinary persons. How much more must this have been the case with the Son of man! His mission was unique—was altogether his own. He could not fulfil his ministry and do the work of him who sent him, without stepping aside from the beaten tracks of conduct, and so courting criticism and obloquy. He could not well conciliate public opinion, for he came to condemn and to revolutionize it. For the most part he went his way, without noticing the misrepresentations and the calumnies of men. Yet there were occasions, like the present, when he paused to answer and to confute his adversaries.

I. THE BLASPHEMOUS CHARGE BROUGHT AGAINST JESUS. His friends charged him with madness; his enemies attributed his works to the power of evil. In the allegation of the former there may have been some sincerity; those of the latter were animated by malice and hatred. Probably these scribes were sent down into Galilee from the authorities at Jerusalem, to check the enthusiasm which was spreading throughout the northern province with regard to the Prophet of Nazareth. The same charges were brought against him in Jerusalem; so that there may have been an understanding as to the method to be adopted in opposing the great Teacher. The scribes discredited Jesus, first, by asserting that he was possessed by Beelzebub, the Syrian Satan; and secondly, by explaining his power to dispossess demons by the league between him and the lord of the demons, whose authority the inferior spirits could not but obey. There was no attempt to deny the fact that demoniacs were cured; this would have been so monstrously false that to take such a position would have been to ruin their own influence with the people.

II. THE REFUTATION OF THIS BLASPHEMY. 1. Our Lord's reply was on the ground of reason—of what might be called common sense. He used two parables, by which he showed the unreasonableness, the absurdity of the allegations in question. Suppose a house or a kingdom to be divided against itself, to be rent by internal discord and faction; what is the result? It comes to ruin. And can it be believed that the crafty prince of darkness will turn his arms against his own servants and minions? So, Satan would "have an end." 2. Having refuted their argument, our Lord proceeded with his own; gave his explanation of what was the spiritual significance of his ministry, especially as regarded the "possessed." So far from being in league with Satan, the Lord Jesus was Satan's one mighty Foe; he had already, in the temptation, overcome him, and was binding him, and now, behold! he was spoiling the house of his vanquished enemy, in expelling the demons from the wretched demoniacs of Galilee! He could not have done this had he been in league with Satan, had he not already vanquished Satan. Having effected this, he "spoiled principalities and powers."

III. THE CENSURE OF THIS BLASPHEMY. Our Lord first reasoned; then (as recorded from ver. 28) he spoke with authority, as One in the secrets of Heaven, with power to declare the principles of Divine judgment. There is, he declared, an eternal and unpardonable sin. If the scribes were not committing this, they were approaching it. The sin against the Holy Ghost, the confusion of truth with error, good with evil,—is a sin, not of ignorance, not of misunderstanding, but of wilfulness; a sin of the whole nature; a sin against the light without and the light within. Our Saviour, in condemning this sin, speaks as the rightful Lord, the authoritative Judge, of all mankind!

APPLICATION. "What think ye of Christ?" To think of him *with indifference* is unreasonable, and shows the most blameable insensibility to the great moral conflict of the universe, on one side of which Jesus is the Champion. To think of him *disparagingly* is blasphemy; for "he that honoureth the Son honoureth the Father," and he that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father. It is blasphemy to speak against the character or the authority of the Son of God. What remains, then? This

to think and speak of him *with reverence and gratitude, faith, and love*. This is just and right; and though Christ does not need our homage and honour, he will accept it and reward it.

Vers. 31-35.—Kindred of Christ. The feeling with regard to Christ had, by this time, become extremely strong. On the one hand, the people generally were deeply interested in his teaching, were eager spectators of his mighty works, and in many cases were much attached to himself. Hence the crowd which thronged the house where Jesus was engaged in teaching—a crowd so dense that none from the outside could approach the Master. On the other hand, the opposition to the Prophet of Nazareth was growing and spreading among the scribes and Pharisees, some of whom from Jerusalem were now usually among the audience, anxiously on the watch for any utterance which they might use to the disadvantage of the bold and fearless Teacher. In these circumstances, the concern of the relatives of Jesus was natural enough. They saw that his labours were so arduous and protracted that he was in danger of exhaustion through weariness. And they feared that the attitude he was taking towards the hypocritical Pharisees was imperilling his liberty and safety. They accordingly professed to believe in his madness, and sought to lay hold on him. Hence the interruption recorded in this passage, which gave rise to this memorable and precious declaration of his spiritual affinity and kindred to all whose life is one of obedience to the Father.

I. THE FACT OF SPIRITUAL KINDRED BETWEEN CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE. Earthly relationships were admitted and honoured by Jesus. Yet spiritual kindred was set above them. Under the gospel dispensation there are revealed emphatically the fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of Christ. We are the children of God. Jesus, in his glory, "is not ashamed to call us brethren."

II. THE PROOF OF SPIRITUAL KINDRED WITH CHRIST. Who are they whom Jesus commends and admits to his fellowship and confidence? They who do his Father's will. Upon such he looks with approval. 1. His requirement is not intellectual or sentimental merely, but *practical*. Belief and feeling are necessary, but not sufficient. We are made to act, and in our life to carry out the Divine commands. Jesus asks the devotion of the heart, expressed in the service of the active nature. We are saved by grace, and works are the proofs of faith. Obedience proceeds from hearty confidence and sincere love. Indeed, the Lord himself has told us that this is the work of God, that we "believe on him whom he hath sent." And Christians are those who prove the sincerity of their love by a practical consecration. 2. It is the privilege of the Christian voluntarily to *obey a personal, Divine will*. He sees the Lawgiver behind the law. His life is not mere conformity to regulation—to some such abstract standard as "the fitness of things." It is subjection to a Being whose will enjoins a course of virtue and piety. Religion has too often, like law, like society, summoned men to do the will of man—of fallible, fickle man. Christ calls us all away from this endeavour to a far nobler and better aim—summons us to do the will, not of man, but of God! This is a standard with which no fault can be found, no dissatisfaction can be felt. 3. Jesus looks for, not a mechanical, but a *spiritual*, obedience. The description of the Christian life is, "doing the will of God from the heart." 4. Christ requires not servile but *filial* obedience. We know from personal experience the difference between doing the will of a master or a ruler and doing the will of a father. It is to this latter kind of obedience that we are called. It is much to believe in the personality and authority of God, but it is more to live under the sense of his fatherhood; for this involves his interest in us, his care for us, his love toward us; and all these are obviously considerations which make duty both delightful and easy. The motive is not merely moral, it becomes religious. The Christian acts as a child who brings before his mind, as a ruling consideration, "my Father's will." 5. Christ desires not occasional or fitful acts of obedience, but *habitual* service. One act is good, both in itself and also as making a second act easier. Obedience becomes a second nature, a law recognized and accepted; and perseverance is the one proof of true principle.

III. THE PRIVILEGE OF SPIRITUAL KINDRED ASSURED BY CHRIST. Men boast of eminent ancestors, distinguished connections, powerful kinsmen; but such boast is usually foolish and vain; whereas it is in the power of the humblest Christian to

glory in the Lord. The friendship of Jesus surpasses that of the greatest and the best of human friends. It is closer and more delightful, it is more honourable and more certain and enduring than the intimacy of human kindred. 1. Participation in Christ's character. There is a family likeness; the Divine features are reproduced. 2. Enjoyment of the tender affection of Christ. 3. Intimate and confidential intercourse with Christ. These two are closely associated. This spiritual relationship involves a peculiar interest, each in the other. So far from indifference, there is mutual regard and concern. The honour of Christ is very near the Christian's heart, and Christ engraves his people "upon the palms of his hands." There is a special tenderness in these mutual regards, very different from the ceremonial or official respect attaching to some relations. "Ye are my friends," says the Saviour. Hymns and devotional books have sometimes exaggerated this side of piety; yet with many probably the danger lies on the other side. As there is a specially confidential tone in the intercourse of the several members of a family, so is there something like this in the fellowship of the Redeemer and his redeemed ones. "All things that I have heard of the Father," says he, "I have made known unto you;" and, on the other side, the follower of the Lord Jesus pours all his intimate thoughts and wishes into the ear of his heavenly Friend and Brother.

IV. THE OBLIGATIONS OF SPIRITUAL KINDRED. Of these may be mentioned: 1. Reverent regard for his honour. 2. Self-denying devotion to his cause. 3. Recognition of his brethren as ours.

PRACTICAL CONCLUSION. Observe the liberality of the language of Jesus, the wide invitation virtually given in his declaration: "*Whosoever*," etc. This is not limited to the learned or the great; it is open to us all.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*The man with the withered hand; or, keeping the sabbath.* In the most sacred and joyous scenes there may be circumstances of pain and sorrow. There are often some in God's house who are hindered in their enjoyment by personal affliction. But even these may be of service in testing the spirit and disposition of God's professed people.

I. IT IS IN SPIRIT ALONE THAT THE SABBATH IS TRULY KEPT. 1. *Outward observances are of value only as expressing and fostering this.* 2. *Evil hearts will fail to keep the day even whilst seemingly engaged in its special duties.* 3. *Institutions that were designed for the highest ends may be perverted to the worst.*

II. WORKS OF MERCY HONOUR THE SABBATH. 1. *Because they are always urgent.* 2. *They exercise the holiest emotions and faculties of human nature.* 3. *They are the service of God.* 4. *They may be the means of others keeping the day and serving him.*

III. THE TRUE SABBATHIC SPIRIT CONVICTS AND INFLAMES THE FALSE. The hatred manifested is all but incredible. Yet it was already in their hearts. They had been condemned where they thought to have been judges. False religion (Pharisees) and worldliness (Herodians) are united in their hatred of the spirit and work of Christ, because they are both exposed by him.—M.

Ver. 4.—"*But they held their peace.*" "There is much silence that proceeds from the Spirit of God, but there is also a devilish silence," says Quesnel; and it is not difficult to pronounce upon the character of this.

I. WHAT WAS INTENDED BY IT. It was evasive. Christ had propounded a dilemma which those who watched him dared not answer, since, had they done so, they would either have compromised themselves or committed themselves to approval of his action. It was doubtless intended also to suggest that the problem was too difficult for them to solve, at any rate without due consideration.

II. WHAT IT SHOWED. There was no concealing from his eyes its real meaning, which he at once denounced. The circumstances of it and the exposure it received made it evident that it was due: 1. *To unwillingness to be convinced.* The state called "*hardness of heart*" it is not easy to resolve into all its elements, but this is undoubtedly the chief one. These men had come into the synagogue with sinister designs against Christ, and so strong was their prejudice that they refused to assent to the most cogent

evidence. The language used by their intended Victim conveys the impression that this "hardening" was in process whilst the scene lasted. It is impossible to dissociate religious opinion from character. Prejudice and malice incapacitate the mind for the reception of truth. Here the most cogent evidence was resisted; for they evidently expected that he would heal the man, and yet were unwilling to attach its due weight to the miracle as a proof of Christ's Divine mission. How much of modern scepticism is to be attributed to similar causes it is impossible to say; but that a large proportion of it is to be so explained cannot be doubted. The hesitation to reply is the more noticeable in this instance as the question is one turning, not upon material evidence, but upon moral considerations. 2. *To lack of sympathy.* The condition of the sufferer did not move them to compassion, even in the house of God. A touchstone of the religious professions of men may still be found in the poor, the suffering, etc. 3. *To dishonesty and cowardice.* They knew how the question ought to have been answered, but they feared the consequences. The question as to killing alarmed their own guilty consciences, for they knew that they had come thither not to worship but to compass the destruction of a fellow-creature. There is still a great deal of suppressed religious conviction amongst men; how are we to interpret it? When moral obligations are evaded, and scepticism is made an excuse for uncertainty of conduct and laxity of life, we are justified in attributing such behaviour to the same principles. There are circumstances that demand candour and outspokenness, and in which silence is dishonourable; we ought "to have the courage of our convictions:" occasions when it is wrong to be silent; when religious zeal is made a cloak for murder, cruelty, injustice, and licentiousness; when the difficulty of theological problems is made an excuse for compromise, or inaction, or moral indifference; when, in the face of the clearest evidence, a man says he "does not know."

III. WHAT IT EARNED. 1. *The anger of Christ.* His look must have searched their hearts and abashed them. There would be in it something of the awfulness of the judgment day. This moral indignation, in which there is surely an element of contempt, is still the sentence upon all similar conduct. 2. *Consciousness of guilt.* They were self-convicted, but the condemnation of one so pure and loving would seal their sense of unworthiness and dishonour. 3. *Exposure.* No one in that crowd was deceived as to their real motive. The same law still prevails; the moral obliquity which refuses to pronounce upon great questions of duty and righteousness will sooner or later be made evident to others. Just as there are circumstances which precipitate opinion, so there are circumstances in every life which call for decided action, and reveal the manner in which one has dealt with one's convictions. At such junctures the man who has been true to his best lights and sincere in following out his convictions, will be honest, fearless, chivalrous; the man who has not been truly in earnest, or disinterested in his attachment to truth, will be seen to shuffle, to shirk responsibility, and to shrink from sacrifice; or, worse still, he will yield to the lusts and tendencies of his baser nature, and act with unscrupulousness, inhumanity, and godlessness. It is the law that opinions determine character; and that, in the course of life, character must inevitably make itself known.—M.

Ver. 5.—"Stretch forth thy hand!" I. CHRIST SOMETIMES ENJOINS WHAT SEEMS TO BE IMPOSSIBLE.

II. FAITH IS SHOWN IN DOING WHAT HE COMMANDS, EVEN WHEN IT SEEMS TO BE IMPOSSIBLE.

III. WHERE THERE IS THE "OBEDIENCE OF FAITH," POWER WILL BE GRANTED.—M.

Vers. 13—19.—*The choosing of the apostles.* I. THE RELATION BETWEEN CHRIST AND HIS SERVANTS WAS DELIBERATELY ENTERED UPON AND VOLUNTARY IN ITS NATURE. 1. *It was formally commenced in retirement.* We may suppose a season of devotion. The absence of public excitement or external interference was evidently desired. 2. *The utmost freedom existed on both sides.* He called "whom he himself would: and they went unto him." There was no coercion. The highest principles and emotions were addressed. On the one hand, the teaching and the work of the Master were not dominated by the influence now associated with him; nor, on the other, was their service other than the fruit of enthusiasm, intelligent conviction, and willing sympathy.

II. REPUTATION WAS RECEIVED FROM CHRIST BY HIS SERVANTS, NOT CONFERRED BY THEM. The names are all of men in humble life, with no previous distinction of any kind. They were names common enough in Palestine. But their connection with Christ has immortalized them. How many have come to the Saviour in similar circumstances, and have received the reflected renown of his name! He makes the best out of the poor materials of human nature, and bestows what human nature in its greatest circumstances and moods could never of itself have produced. Men are honoured in being made the servants of Christ.

III. THE APOSTLES WERE TO BE REPRESENTATIVE IN OFFICE AND CHARACTER FOR ALL TIME. As his first disciples, and because of the marked variety and force of their individual natures as influenced by the gospel and developed in Christ's service; their names have wrought themselves into the very texture of the gospel, and we have received it with the impress of their varied natures and habits of thought. "He sent them forth to *preach*, and to have authority to cast out devils"—a fundamental work. Therefore are they called "the foundation of the apostles and prophets," of whom Jesus is the Corner-stone. In serving Christ they laid the world and the ages under inestimable obligation.—M.

Vers. 20, 21.—*Christ hindered by his friends.* 1. THROUGH IGNORANCE. Owing (1) to want of sympathy with him in his higher aims; and (2) consequent failure of spiritual perception.

II. BY CHARGING HIM WITH MADNESS. They had so little of the spirit of self-denial in themselves that they could not understand enthusiasm which would not admit of his attending to his own wants, "so much as to eat bread." 1. *They feared also the consequences which might arise from the presence of his enemies.* The scribes were there "from Jerusalem," on the alert to find accusation against him; and they must have been observed. 2. *But by this charge they discredited the character of his ministry.* Who should be supposed to know whether he was sane or not, if not his own family? In attributing to maniacy the Divine works and words of Christ, they did him and all who might through him have life and peace, a cruel, irreparable wrong. So Paul was charged with being beside himself; and all who for Christ's sake try to live above the maxims and aims of the world will meet with similar judgment. The blow thus struck is not at an individual, but at the spiritual prospects and hopes of a whole race.

III. BY UNAUTHORIZED AND UNTIMELY INTERFERENCE. 1. *A sin of presumption.* The judgment was hasty and mistaken; the action was unjustifiable, both foolish and wicked. 2. *Enmity to God.*—M.

Vers. 20—22.—*The Saviour judged by the world.* There were various opinions amongst the multitude. They cannot be indifferent to the work and teaching of Christ. "Some believed, and some believed not." Of those who did not believe all were in opposition to him. This circumstance was—

I. A TRIBUTE TO THE INFLUENCE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE GOSPEL.

II. IT ILLUSTRATED THE IMPOTENCY OF THE CARNAL MIND IN SPIRITUAL QUESTIONS.

III. IT SUGGESTS THE PERILS TO WHICH THE CARNAL MIND IS EXPOSED. "Lest haply ye be found to fight against God" (Acts v. 39).

IV. IT SUGGESTS THE DUTY UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES OF CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY.—M.

Vers. 23—27.—*"How can Satan cast out Satan?" or, the logic of spiritual forces.* The spirit of Christ's answer to this malicious attack is calm, fearless, and full of light. He meets the charge with convincing and irrefutable logic.

I. THE DEFENCE. There are two elements in his argument: 1. *A demonstration.* It is the familiar *reductio ad absurdum*, such as one might use with a schoolboy. It is so simple and trenchant that it straightway becomes an attack of the most powerful kind. He treats them as children in knowledge, and convicts them at the same time of diabolical malice. 2. *An inference.* Here the advantage is pushed beyond the point expected. He is not satisfied with a mere disclaimer; he comes to a further and higher deduction. If it was true that he did not cast out Satan by Satan, then it must also be true that he cast out Satan in spite of the latter; and that could only mean one thing. Satan,

"the strong man," must have been bound by the Son of man, else he would not suffer himself to be so "spoiled." This is at once an assurance full of comfort to his friends and a warning to his enemies.

II. POSITIONS ASSUMED IN IT. 1. *The solidarity of evil.* 2. *The irreconcilableness of the kingdoms of light and darkness.*—M.

Vers. 28—30.—*The unforgivable sin.* I. AN ACTUAL OFFENCE. It is not mentioned again in the Gospel, but the warning was called forth by the actual transgression. There is no mere theorizing about it therefore. It is an exposure and denunciation. This gives us an idea of the fearful unbelief and bitter hatred of those who opposed him. The manifestation of light and love only strengthened the antagonism of some. They consciously sinned against the light.

II. WHY IS IT UNFORGIVABLE? 1. *Because of the majesty of the crime.* It identifies the Representative and Son of God with the devil—the best with the worst. 2. *From the nature of the spiritual state induced.* When a man deliberately falsifies his spiritual intuitions, and corrupts his conscience so that good is considered evil, there is no hope for him. Such a condition can only be the result of long-continued opposition to God and determined hatred of his character. The means of salvation are thereby robbed of their possibility to save.

III. THE LIKELIHOOD OF ITS BEING REPEATED. As it is an extreme and final degree of sin, there is little danger of its being committed without full consciousness and many previous warnings. 1. *It is therefore, a priori, improbable in any.* Yet as increasing light and grace tend to throw into stronger opposition the spirit of evil, it must be regarded as: 2. *A possibility of every sinner.* Necessity for self-examination and continual recourse to the cleansing and illuminating power of Christ.—M.

Vers. 31—35.—*The mother and the brethren of Jesus.* The annoyance and hindrance of a moment are turned to eternal gain to the cause of truth.

I. FAMILY INFLUENCES MAY INJURE SPIRITUAL USEFULNESS. They are powerful either way. They operate subtly and constantly. A tendency to narrowness in the family tie, which requires to be checked. Much of this influence which is adverse to Christian life is unconsciously so. Yet the intensest forms of hatred to truth and goodness are exhibited within the family relation. Hence the necessity for clear and forcible realization of the distinction between lower and higher obligations. The child of God will have recourse to constant prayer for help and guidance, and for the conversion of relatives.

II. THERE ARE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE NATURAL MUST YIELD TO THE SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP. This is so whenever they conflict, or when, both being of Divine obligation, the latter is manifestly more immediately impressed upon the conscience, and more evidently calculated for the good of men and the glory of God.

III. THE NEAREST AND ONLY PERMANENT RELATION TO CHRIST IS SPIRITUAL AND NOT NATURAL. 1. *An invitation to all.* 2. *An encouragement and inspiration to real disciples.* 3. *A forecast of the communion of saints.*—M.

Vers. 35.—*Divine relationships.* 1. HOW FAR RESEMBLING HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS. 1. *In laying down the condition of Divine relationship, Christ does not absolutely displace human relationships.* It would have been hard for him so to do, since men were being addressed, and the relationships sustained by them would depend upon the religious sanction they might possess for the measure of honour and faithful observance they would receive. That the terms of human relationship were still employed showed that an analogy at least existed. 2. *The terms denoting the distinctions of natural relationships are used in speaking of the heavenly.* The "brother" and "sister" and "mother," therefore, express a real distinction in the heavenly family. And there are differences of mutual service and affection which must exist within the common "bond of charity," even as on earth. In the case of those who believe in Christ, then, the beautiful variation which God has created in the affection of the domestic circle will have a use and fitness in fulfilling the duties and realizing the ideal of the Divine life. The latter has its sphere for the sisterliness, the brotherliness, etc., even as the human life; and these are modes through which the Divine love will express itself. Indeed, it may be

said that the human affections of father, mother, etc., do not fully manifest or realize themselves in the merely human life; it is the Divine life in which the ideal of each is rendered possible.

II. IN WHAT RESPECTS DIFFERING FROM THESE. 1. *The affections characteristic of the human family will spring from a spiritual principle and express Divine love.* "The will of God," or "the will of the Father," will take the place of blind instinct or selfish gratification. Thus springing from a new source they will be transformed, purified, and freed from limitation and defect. "The will of God" will be the law according to which they will express themselves; but as that will has been interpreted as salvation and universal benevolence, so the distinctions of human affection will be brought into play in furthering the redemptive scheme of the Father amongst his sinful children; and through them phases of the Divine love will be realized that would otherwise find no expression. They will thus, also, be universalized and directed into channels of service and helpfulness. 2. *The Divine relationship is therefore based upon a new nature.* It is only those who are born of the Spirit who can do the will of God. It is the life of the Spirit in them that changes and adapts them for the unselfish affections of the family of God. 3. *The Divine relationship is a moral possibility of every one.* Every woman may become a sister, a mother, of Christ; every man his brother.—M.

Ver. 2.—*A miracle of healing.* The cure of the man with a withered hand was more obviously a supernatural work than sudden recovery from a fever, so that we need not wonder at the excitement it aroused. But it was only an example of many similar works, and as such we propose to consider it.

I. THE MIRACLE WHICH JESUS DID. 1. *It was a removal of bodily infirmity.* Although the Son of God came from heaven to do a spiritual work, much of the time of his earthly ministry was spent in curing physical disorders. We might have supposed that, coming from a painless and sorrowless world he would have had sparse sympathy with such suffering; that he would have exhorted to fortitude and self-control, and expectation of a time when pain would be no more. It was not so, however. He sympathized with all sufferers, and, although he had before him a stupendous spiritual work, he by no means confined himself to it. Though sometimes he had "no leisure so much as to eat," he found time to heal many bodily diseases; and he did this without hurrying over it as if it were an inferior work, or as if it were necessitated by the hardness of the human heart; but he did it lovingly and constantly, as being an essential part of his mission. In some respects, no doubt, this was a lower work than preaching. The body is inferior to the soul, as the tent is to its inhabitant. The effects of cure were only transient, for none were promised exemption in the future from disease or death. Yet these lower and temporary blessings were generously bestowed by One who habitually stood in the light of eternity. Point out the ministry of mercy which the Church has yet to do, in Christ's name, for suffering humanity. 2. *It was a miracle with a moral purpose.* The supernatural works of Christ were not mainly intended to excite attention. When he was asked "for a sign" with that object, he resolutely refused it. Had this been his purpose, he would have flung snowy Hermon into the depths of the sea, instead of doing the kind of work which is more slowly done by human physicians. He had a better purpose than this. He healed disease because, as the Conqueror of sin, he would point out and abolish some of its effects. He rescued a man, if only for a time, from the evil that harassed him, to show that he was his Redeemer. And besides this, he appeared as the Representative of God, and therefore did what he is ever doing in more gradual methods. A modern writer has wisely said, "This, I think, is the true nature of miracles; they are an epitome of God's processes in nature, beheld in connection with their source." We are apt to forget God in the processes through which he ordinarily works, and this forgetfulness could not be better checked than by the miracles in which Christ did directly what is usually done indirectly. For example, when we eat our daily bread, we know all that man has done with the corn since the harvest, and seldom think of God who gave life to the seed, strength to the husbandman, and nutriment to the ground. But if we saw the processes condensed into one Divine act, as the multitude did on the hillside, when Jesus created bread, there would be a recognition of God which would afterwards find expression in the more ordinary events we saw. So with the healing of the diseased. Every such miracle

revealed God as the Dispenser of health and the Giver of all blessings. 3. *It was a miracle having special significance for the spectators.* By means of it Christ taught more clearly the nature and design of the sabbath day. His foes had followed him from Jerusalem, with the resolute determination to destroy his influence and, if possible, to compass his death. Already they had detected his disciples in the violation of a rabbinical rule by rubbing corn in their hands on the sacred day. And the Lord had at once thrown over his followers the shield of his authority, as an Achilles would have done over the wounded Greeks, and had roundly declared that the "Son of man was Lord even of the sabbath day." They hoped now that he would publicly commit himself by some action in harmony with this declaration, and that so prejudice might be raised against his heresy. Show how bravely, wisely, and victoriously he met this, and taught for all generations that "it is lawful to do well on the sabbath day."

II. THE LESSONS JESUS TAUGHT. 1. *Neglecting opportunities for doing good is really doing evil.* Jesus Christ meant, by the alternative he put in the fourth verse, that if he did not do the good he was able to do for this poor sufferer, he did him a wrong. This is universally true. If at the judgment seat any appear who have done nothing for others and for their Lord, they will not be able to say, "We have done no harm!" for they have injured themselves and others by neglect. The "wicked and slothful servant" was not condemned because he had done harm with his wealth and talent, but because he had done no good with them, having digged in the earth and hid his lord's money. 2. *Loving help is better than outward ritual.* The religious leaders of our Lord's day thought it of vital importance that the law of the Jewish sabbath—"Thou shalt do no manner of work"—should be observed with scrupulous exactness. But on that holy day Christ freely cured disease, and so taught the people the meaning of Jehovah's words, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." We are bound so to use our sacred day, associating acts of love and mercy with the services which sanctify its hours. 3. *Fear of personal consequences should never hinder the true servant of God.* What our Lord did on this occasion so aroused anger that we read in St. Luke's Gospel, "They were filled with madness;" and "straightway they took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him." Foreseeing this, he did not hesitate for a moment. May the fear of God in us also cast out all fear of man!—A. R.

Ver. 5 (first part).—*The Saviour's view of sin.* Describe the scene in the synagogue; the wickedness of the plot formed by the Pharisees; the compassion of our Lord, breaking through it as a mighty tide over a flimsy barrier; the nobility of his teaching concerning the right use of the sabbath; the healing of the man with the withered hand, etc. Our text graphically describes the feeling with which our Lord regarded his adversaries, and this deserves earnest consideration. At first the bold declaration, "He looked round about on them with anger," startles us; for it seems in contradiction to his meekness and patience, which were perfect. But the explanation follows, "Being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." This shows the nature of his feeling. It reminds us of another occasion (Luke xiii. 34), when he spoke of Jerusalem in a tone of reproachful indignation; but at once added the gentle words, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings!" On both occasions there was a blending of feelings which too often appear to us contradictory and incompatible. But it is possible to be "angry and sin not." Christ looked on the Pharisees, and was indignant at their hypocrisy and unscrupulous hatred; but at once the feeling softened into pity as he thought of the insidious process of "hardening," which (as the Greek implies) was still going on, to end in hopeless callousness. With him warning was mingled with weeping; as his disciple Paul afterwards spoke with tears of those who were "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. iii. 18). In this, as in all things else, Christ has left us an example; therefore we will endeavour first to—

I. UNDERSTAND THE COMPLEX FEELING HERE EXEMPLIFIED. We see in it two elements: 1. *Indignation against sin.* We are constantly coming in contact with the faults and sins of men. Our newspapers contain accounts of murders and cruelties, of thefts and treasons. Overreaching and fraud meet us in business; slander and enmity lurk in society. Sensibility to such sins is not only not wrong, it is right and Christlike, and will become more keen as we grow in likeness to our Lord. It is an

evil day for a man when he becomes callous even to those wickednesses which will never affect him personally; for this is distinctly contrary to the feeling which moved the Saviour to effect the world's redemption. As his disciples, we must never be good-naturedly easy about sin; we must not put on an air of worldly indifference; we must not attempt to hush feeling to rest, as if men were committed by a resistless fate to do "all these abominations" (Jer. vii. 10). The presence and prevalence of sin should stir within us strong moral indignation. 2. *Indignation tending to pity.* Anger should be swallowed up in grief. Indignation against wrong-doing, whether it affects ourselves or not, must not make us forget the deepest commiseration for the wrong-doer. Instead of this, too often, proud of our own virtue, we stand on our small moral pedestal, and look with scorn on those below it. Respected and honoured ourselves, with our robes to outward appearance unstained, we gather them about us, and sweep past some fallen brother or sister, and say, "Come not near unto me; for I am holier than thou!" The evil effects of this are manifold. We may drive others into deeper sin, because despair takes the place of hope in them; and we weaken ourselves in the service of our Lord. We can never benefit one whom we despise, or over whom we secretly exult; for nothing but love can so grasp the sinner as to lift him out of the horrible pit. Nor is it enough that we are indignant and angry with sin, so that as passionate parents or denunciatory preachers we administer hasty reproof or indiscriminate punishment. Our faults will never conquer the faults of others. We must seek to deal with others as our Lord did. He loved the sinner, even when he hated the sin. His "gentleness hath made us great."

II. *INCULCATION OF THE DUTIES HERE SUGGESTED.* Let us point out a few considerations which may help us to cultivate the temper of mind we have discussed. 1. *Remember what sin is and what sin has done.* It caused the loss of Paradise; it brought about the sickness and sorrows we suffer; it made our work hard and unproductive; it created discord between man and his fellow, between man and his God; it seemed so woeful in itself and its results, to him who knows all things, that the Son of God gave himself as a sacrifice to save us from its power; it is so stupendous in its nature and awful in its issues that it is not a subject for selfish irritation, but one respecting which pity should blend with indignation. He who has done you a wanton wrong has injured himself far more than he can injure you. Therefore, beware of peevish anger and sinful revenge, remembering the words of the Master, "Blessed are the meek, . . . the merciful, . . . the peacemakers, . . . the persecuted for righteousness' sake." 2. *Reflect on what sin might have done for you.* How far character and reputation are affected by circumstances we cannot tell. But if we all have the same passions and evil propensities, our moral victory or defeat may depend largely on the degree of temptation which is permitted to assail us. We cherish a vindictive feeling against one who has offended his country's laws, but possibly our own criminality might have been as great but for the good providence of God. Certain classes of sin are so harshly and indiscriminately condemned that she who commits them is only left to plunge more deeply into sin and misery. But perhaps temptations were great, and home defences were few and frail, and the first wrong step was taken ignorantly, and then there seemed no going back. The story of the weeping penitent at our Saviour's feet is a rebuke to the want of pitifulness shown too often by the Christian Church. 3. *See the nobility of the feeling here portrayed.* To look with scorn, or with indifference, or with pleasure on sin, indicates a very low state of moral feeling. To burst forth with indignation against it is higher, but it is a sign of the youth of one's virtue, the manhood of which is seen in Jesus Christ. Forbearance and gentleness are among the higher Christian graces. We expect them of the cultured nation rather than of a savage horde, of a mature man than of a half-disciplined child. "He who ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city." To control angry feeling within ourselves is the best means of helping us to control the evil deeds of others in our home and in the world.—A. R.

Ver. 5 (latter part).—"Stretch forth thy hand!" There was no kind of pain which Jesus could not relieve. no kind of grief he could not assuage. Those who were regarded as unclean were welcomed, and those whom none could cure he healed. Like the heavenly Father, of whom he was "the express image," he was "kind to the

unthankful and to the unworthy." We will regard the restoration of the man with the withered hand to health and soundness as a typical example of what our gracious Lord is ever doing. It reminds us of the following truths respecting him:—

I. OUR LORD GIVES STRENGTH FOR DAILY LABOUR. The apocryphal "Gospel according to the Hebrews" says that this sufferer was a mason by trade, and represents him as beseeching the Saviour to heal him in order that he might no longer be compelled to beg his daily bread. Be this as it may, he presented a piteous spectacle, for his limb was wasted, all power in it was gone as completely as if death had seized it, and he was without hope of cure. It was no small blessing to have that limb made in an instant "whole as the other;" for henceforth honest industry was possible. We too may thank God if what we have has been sweetened by the toil which has made it our own. He gives us power to get wealth. It is his kindly providence which saves us from eating the bitter bread of charity and dependence.

II. THE LORD GIVES STRENGTH FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE. Until we feel his touch and hear his voice, we are towards religious work what this man was towards daily work. Many in our congregations in this sense have their hand withered. Some cannot put forth their hand to give to the poor, to minister to the sick, to lead others to the Saviour, to "subscribe with their hands to the Lord," or even to lay hold on salvation. Their hand is withered. This paralysis or incapacity has its source in sin, in the selfishness which lives without love, in the pride which refuses to alter old habits, in the avarice which will hoard all it grasps, in the distrust of God that will make no venture. Only when God reveals the sin, and by his grace destroys it, can such be fit to serve him. But if Christ's voice is heard, there will come the stirring of new strength, the uprising of a new purpose in life, and the question will rise to heaven, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

III. THE LORD OFTEN EFFECTS THIS IN HIS OWN HOUSE. As once Jesus was found in the synagogue, so now he is often found in the assembly of his people. After his resurrection he appeared amongst the praying disciples, and it was on those who had assembled together with one accord for prayer that the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. How often since, in our congregations, the power of the Lord has been present to heal us! Sin-laden souls have been relieved; the perplexed have been guided aright; those morally weak have renewed their strength by waiting upon God; hungry souls have been satisfied; and those dead in trespasses and sins have been quickened to new life. Therefore, let us go to his house constantly, reverently, expectantly, and he will bless us "above all that we ask or think."

IV. THE LORD CONNECTS HIS HIGHER BLESSINGS WITH PROMPT AND FEARLESS OBEDIENCE TO HIS WORD. Directly Jesus saw the man with the withered hand, he said, "Stand forth!" It was a simple command, but not easy under the circumstances to obey. Jesus was a comparative stranger; the position of a crippled man, who was made the gazing-stock of a congregation, would be painful; and the Pharisees might be angered by obedience. But on the man's part there was no hesitation. To the voice of authority he yielded at once, perhaps not without the stirring of new hope in his heart. This first act of obedience made the second more easy. After a few words to the Pharisees, our Lord spoke to him again, saying, "Stretch forth thy hand!" He might have urged that it was impossible for him to do that, and that the attempt would only cover him with ridicule. But faith was growing fast and courage with it. He made the effort, and with the effort came the strength; believing that through Christ he could do it, he did it, and his hand was restored "whole as the other." Many fail now through their want of this obedience of faith. They get no blessing because they neglect to obey the first command that comes to them. They want the assurance of salvation, the certain hope of heaven, and wonder that it does not come, though they have not obeyed the command. "Bow down in penitential prayer," or "give up the sin you love." Because they do not "stand forth in the midst," they do not hear the command, "Stretch forth thy hand!" Be true to the impulse God gives, and then "to him that hath, to him shall be given yet more abundantly." In that synagogue Christ was both a Stone of stumbling and a sure Foundation, over which some stumbled and others rose to higher things. We too may leave his presence, like the Pharisees, hardened, or like this man who, believing and obeying, became ready for the work God gave him to do. Which shall it be?—A. R.

Vers. 13, 14.—*The helpers of Jesus.* Our Lord was fulfilling the prophecy Simeon had uttered concerning him. From the cradle to the cross he was “set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, . . . that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” As a new element introduced into a chemical solution will detect and separate the elements already there, so did Christ appear in the moral world. With growing distinctness his foes and friends became separate communities. “He called unto him” those who were ready for service, while those who were hostile became more pronounced in their hatred. The Pharisaic party, which began by the denial of his authority, tried next to disparage his character, and finally plotted his destruction. It is the tendency of sin thus to go onward toward deeper guilt. He who “stands in the way of sinners” at last “sits in the seat of the scornful.” So unscrupulous had the Pharisees become that (ver. 6) they even took counsel with the Herodians to destroy him. Professedly patriotic and orthodox, they united with the friends of the usurper; and (as so often since) priests and tyrants combined against the Christ. See how Christ met this hostility. He might have overwhelmed his foes by superhuman power, but he resolutely refused to use force against them (Matt. iv. 8-10; xxvi. 53, 54). He might have defied them, and so hastened the crisis which ultimately came; but “his hour had not yet come,” for he had a ministry yet to fulfil. Hence he gave himself up to more private work, avoiding perils, although he never feared them, and labouring amongst the poor and obscure. Around him he gathered a few faithful ones, “that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.” This text gives us some thoughts.

I. ON PREPARATION FOR SERVICE. See how our Lord prepared himself and his disciples. “He goeth up into a mountain”—an expression which in the Gospels implies the withdrawal of our Lord from the people for the purpose of prayer. This preceded all his great deeds and sufferings, as was exemplified in the temptation and in the agony. It was fitting that the disciples should be appointed in a place of prayer. Apart from the world and near to God, we are ready to hear our Master’s words and receive his commission. From the height of communion with God we should come down to our work (Isa. lii. 7). His requirement of spiritual fitness for spiritual work is shown by his constant refusal of the testimony of demons (ver. 12): “He straitly charged them that they should not make him known.” This verse, immediately preceding our text, makes a suggestive contrast with it. He recoiled from an ambiguous confession. As the Holy One, he would not suffer the unclean to bear witness to him. The testimony was true, but the spirit that gave it was evil. These disciples were “ordained,” or more correctly (Revised Version) “appointed,” that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach. The former was the preparation for the latter. Only those who are in communion with Jesus can truly bear witness for him to the world.

II. ON ADVANTAGE IN FELLOWSHIP. The Lord himself cared for the sympathy and co-operation of others. Even in his direst agony he would not be without it (ch. xiv. 34). Much more was it necessary for his disciples to be associated in a common brotherhood; the beauty of which appears again and again to those who study the Acts and the Epistles. In the fellowship of the Church, one supplements the weakness of another; numbers increase enthusiasm and afford hope to the timid; intercourse with others removes one-sidedness of character, etc. See the teaching of St. Paul about the “body of Christ,” and “the temple of the Holy Spirit,” in which Christians are living stones, mutually dependent, and all resting on Christ.

III. ON DIVERSITIES AMONG DISCIPLES. Jesus chose “twelve” for special work—a number probably selected as a reminder that they were primarily commissioned to be ambassadors to the twelve tribes, and as a type of the perfection of the redeemed Church (Rev. vii.). But even in that comparatively small company, what diversities of gifts! Some of them are indicated even in the brief list of their names given here by St. Mark. We see the Rock-man, Peter; “the beloved disciple,” John; the fiery “sons of thunder;” the guileless Nathanael; the zealot Simon; and the traitor Judas. Each had his special gift and sphere. And still there are “diversities of gifts” amongst the Lord’s disciples.

IV. ON POSSIBILITIES OF PERIL. Judas Iscariot lived with Jesus, was called by him, possessed miraculous gifts, preached the gospel to others; but he died a traitor

and a suicide. To fill a spiritual office, and yet to be careless of our own spiritual life, is fatal. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."—A. R.

Vers. 7—35.—Retirement. In the calm and successful prosecution of his work, Jesus has excited various feelings in the minds of the different classes around him. He has wrought many miracles—all of them miracles of mercy; almost all, so far as recorded, miracles of healing. Of necessity his presence is hailed by the throngs of needy and suffering ones, and "his name is as ointment poured forth" to the multitudes who have proved his power to heal. These cannot be restrained from publishing his fame abroad, though he has begged them to be silent, for he sees but too plainly the hindrance to his usefulness which a blaze of popularity would cause. In the course of his teaching he has made the Pharisees to blush more than once; and the popular movement which he seems likely to excite has stirred up the fears or the jealousies of the court party—"the Herodians," who join their own political antagonists in their opposition to him, and they together plot his destruction. His relatives, "friends," including the highly honoured one, "his mother, and his brethren," are excited with fear that "he is beside himself," for he allows not himself time to "so much as eat bread." "Scribes from Jerusalem," learned in the Law, the trained expounders of its sacred truths, and the authoritative adjudicators in matters of dispute, pass their judgment and verdict in explanation of the astounding facts which they cannot or dare not deny. "He is possessed," they say, "by the very 'prince of the devils.' He is the tool, the agent of Beelzebub himself, and 'by the prince of the devils casteth he out the devils.'" This is truly a most ingenious though the most wicked of all explanations; a very blasphemy, ascribing the work of "the Holy Spirit" to "an unclean spirit," and placing Jesus in the lowest category of all—lower than the lowest. It affirms him to be the agent of the arch-demon, working his behests, the servant of the devil of devils. And if possession by an evil spirit is the consequence and punishment of evil work, as was the current opinion, he is surely the worst of the bad. All this needs adjustment. The anger of some, the timidity, the fears, the indiscreet zeal, the error, the false views, and the wickedness of others, must all be corrected. For this purpose he, "with his disciples," withdraws "to the sea," where, "because of the crowd, lest they should throng him," he orders that in future "a little boat should wait on him;" by which means he can escape the press, and either teach from the boat or sail away for rest and quiet. At even-tide "he goeth up into the mountain," where he continues "all night in prayer to God;" needful in the midst of so much pressure and excitement, and most fitting in anticipation of the great work of the morrow. Then, when the morning breaks, he calls his disciples to him, from whom he chooses twelve, "that they might be with him," for his own comfort and for purposes of training for future service in his kingdom, "and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have authority to cast out devils, and to heal all manner of disease, and all manner of sickness." These "he named apostles," and "appointed," and "sent forth," and "charged them." Then, with awful withering words, he silences the scribes, first by argument, showing that on their own ground the divided kingdom "hath an end;" then by pointing to the "eternal sin" which he committeth who thus "shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit," and who "hath never forgiveness." And now, turning to his anxious relatives, he asks and answers the question, "Who is my mother and my brethren?" Breaking loose from the bonds of mere natural relationship, he declares that he holds the closest alliance with "whosoever shall do the will of God." From all which every true disciple treading in his Master's steps, and hearkening to his Master's teaching, may learn: 1. The wisdom of frequent withdrawal from the excitements of life into calm, quieting intercourse with God in prayer, to the cooling contemplation of the Divine works, and the humbling communion with his own soul. 2. The sacredness of holy companionship; and, if he is called to teach great truths, the wisdom of gathering around him a few sympathetic spirits, and sharing with them his work and honour for the general good. 3. The necessity for keeping his mind sensitively alive to the teachings of the Holy Spirit, lest, resisting, he grieve him, and quench the only light by which the path of life may be found. 4. To learn the terrible peril to which he exposes himself who "puts darkness for light." 5. And joyfully to see the high calling which is of God, the close alliance with the

Lord Christ which is secured to him who keeps the commandments of God, concerning whom the Lord says, "The same is my brother, and sister, and mother."—G.

Vers. 1—6.—*Sabbath observance.* I. THE SABBATH MAY BE OBSERVED TO THE LETTER WHILE BROKEN IN THE SPIRIT. Here were men watching to see whether a man would *dare* to do a loving deed! The letter, which can never be more than the expression of the spirit, must be kept at all costs—except that of the literalists. There are pedants who will quarrel with a great writer because he departs from the "rules of grammar," forgetting that grammar is but a collection of observations of the best that has been written. So there are ritualists who will slander a good man because he neglects rites for the sake of going to the root of all rites.

II. CENSORIOUSNESS THE CERTAIN SYMPTOM OF SELF-DISCONTENT. Why do we want to find fault with others? Because we are not satisfied with ourselves. We must either feed on a good conscience or on the semblance of it. And it seems that we are better than others whenever we can put them in an unfavourable light.

III. EMULATION AND ENVY ARE NEAR AKIN. We are jealous of great successes. Jealousy is natural enough. It depends on the will whether the effects be good or evil on ourselves. A noble deed! let me seek to imitate it and share the blessedness of it: this is good. A noble deed! let me extinguish the author of it, who shames me: this of the devil, devilish; of hell, hellish. The ideal Christian and the ideal Pharisee are in eternal opposition. Goodness produces one of two effects in us—we long to embrace it and possess it, or to kill it.—J.

Vers. 7—12.—*Testimony of evil to goodness.* I. ITS SINCERITY. We see many coming to Christ who thought they could get an immediate good from him. Others kept aloof who doubted what good could come, what evil might come, from the intercourse. The devils, whether for good or evil, "rush to Jesus." Whenever there is such a "rush," something significant is stirring.

II. ITS IRRESISTIBLE CHARACTER. There are men, there are movements, which are advertised by the evil they elicit from the latent depths of the heart. Observe the man who is hated, and *by whom*; observe the man who is loved, and *by whom*. Note the centre of attraction, and *for what sort of people*; the centre of repulsion, and *for what sort of people*; and you have a clue to important truths. Christ is illustrated by all these rules. Who were they who approached him in love then? who now? What were the instincts arrayed against him—then and now?—J.

Vers. 13—19.—*The need of missionaries.* I. POPULARIZERS OF GREAT DOCTRINES ARE NECESSARY in every branch of science, art, literature, religion. Where would the sublime doctrine we call the gospel have been, as an influence, had there not been found men to make it "current coin"?

II. SECOND-HAND INSTRUMENTALITY PLAYS A LARGE PART IN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD. Few are the leaders or generals, many the officers, multitudinous the rank and file; but every soldier who is in living contact with the Leader's spirit may and will work marvels.

III. FREEBLENESS BECOMES STRENGTH WHEN INSPIRED BY ORIGINAL FORCE. These were humble men, yet their names live. They were reflections of Christ, as he was the Reflection of the power and love of God.

IV. THERE IS A MORAL MIXTURE IN EVERY RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT. A Judas among the apostles. Something of a Judas even in every apostle's heart. Light contends with darkness in the twilight before each great historical dawn. The characters of great religious reformers have often been mixed and dubious. There is a traitor in every camp, a doubtful element in every good man's life.—J.

Vers. 20—30.—*The sin against the Holy Spirit.* I. THE CHARGE AGAINST JESUS. He holds to Beelzebub, and by the chief of demons casts out demons. 1. It was absurd; but absurd arguments readily satisfy passion and hate and those who have no care for the truth. They accused the Saviour, in short, of a self-contradiction in thought and action, which was a moral impossibility. 2. It was wicked. It had the worst element of the lie in it—it denied the truth within them.

II. THE WORST DEGREE OF SIN. Sin has its scale, its climax. There are sins of instinct and of passion and of ignorance. When there is little light to be guided by there is little light to sin against. The next step in sin is where there is deliberation before the wrong is done. Last and worst is where not only the deliberate judgment is gone against, but the attempt is made to deny the principle of judgment in the soul itself. The hands of the watch move backwards; the lamp flage with the very abundance of oil; the man's soul dies. Over against the words "Repent! be forgiven!" stand these, "Irreclaimable! unforgivable!"—J.

Vers. 31—35.—Kinship to Jesus. I. **FIRST THAT WHICH IS NATURAL, AFTERWARDS THAT WHICH IS SPIRITUAL.** This is one order. Our spiritual being is built up on a natural basis. Slowly the bud of the higher being unfolds from the plant of earthly root. Through the home to the Church; by the love of mother and brother and sister, to the love of God and of all.

II. FIRST THE SPIRITUAL, AFTERWARDS THE NATURAL. This is the order in another way. The end of our being is in the spiritual; this is its dignity, its reflection of the Divine. It claims the first thought, other things being equal. When friends stand in the way of duty, between us and the light of truth, we must be true to the higher self. It may seem a stern rule, until we find that every low affection we renounced for the higher is given back to us bathed in a new glory.—J.

Vers. 1—6. Parallel passages: Matt. xii. 9—14; Luke vi. 6—11.—The man with the withered hand. I. **THE NATURE OF THE DISEASE.** It was a case of severe paralysis of the hand—the *right* hand, as St. Luke, with a physician's accuracy, informs us. The sinews were shrunken, and the hand shrivelled and dried up. And yet we owe to St. Mark's great particularity in narration and minuteness of detail a piece of information that one might rather have expected from the professional skill of "the beloved physician," Luke. St. Luke, as well as St. Matthew, uses an adjective (*ξηρα*, equivalent to dry) to describe, in a general way, the state of the diseased member; but St. Mark employs the participle of the perfect passive (*ξηραμμένην*, equivalent to having been dried up), which furnishes a hint as to the origin of the ailment. While from the expression of the former two evangelists we might conclude that the ailment was congenital—that the man was born with it; we are enabled, by the term made use of in the Gospel before us, to correct that conclusion, and to trace this defect of the hand as the result of disease or of accident.

II. VARIETY OF DISEASES. The multitude of "ills that flesh is heir to" is truly wonderful; the variety of diseases that afflict poor frail humanity is astonishing. Whatever be the place of our abode, or wherever we travel, we find our fellow-creatures subject to weakness, pains, physical defects, wasting disease, pining sickness, and bodily ailments, too many and too various to enumerate. No continent, no island, no zone of earth, is exempt. The greatest salubrity of climate, though it may somewhat diminish the number, does not do away with cases of the kind. Though our lot be cast amid the mildness of Southern climes, or under the clear bright sky of Eastern lands; though our dwelling-place be—

"Far from the winters of the West,
By every breeze and season blest;"

still we find ourselves within the reach of those infirmities that seem the common lot of man. We cannot read far in the Gospels, or trace the ministry of our Lord to much length, until we find him surrounded by and ministering to whole troops of invalids and impotent folk.

III. SOURCE OF ALL DISEASES. If there were no sin there would be no sorrow, and if there were no sin there would be no sickness. The effects of sin extend to both body and soul. Sin has brought disease as well as death into the world, as we read, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." As death has thus passed upon all men, so disease, more or less aggravated, at one time or other, has become the lot of all; for what are pain and disease and sickness but forerunners, remote it may be, of death, and forfeitures of sin? The original punitive sentence was not *Moth tumath*, "Thou shalt be

put to death," that is, immediately or instantaneously; but *Moth tamuth*, "Thou shalt die," namely, by a process now commenced, and, though slow, yet sure; for sin has planted the germ of death in the system. It is as though, simultaneously with the breath of life, the process of decay and death began, part after part wasting away in consequence of disease or in the so-called course of nature, till the vital spark at last becomes extinct, and "the dust returns to the earth as it was." A heathen poet preserves the remnant of an old tradition, which, like many of the traditions of heathenism, is evidently a dispersed and distorted ray from the light of revelation. He tells us that a crowd of wasting diseases invaded this earth's inhabitants in consequence of crime; while a Christian poet speaks of that lazarus-house which sin has erected on our earth, "wherein are laid numbers of all diseased, all maladies, . . . and where dire are the tossings, deep the groans." But for transgression manhood would have remained in all its original health and vigour and perfection, like "Adam, the goodliest man of men since born his sons;" and womanhood would have retained all the primitive grace and loveliness and beauty that bloomed in "the fairest of her daughters, Eve."

IV. TIME AND PLACE OF THE CURE. The time was the sabbath day; and this was one of the seven miracles which our Lord performed on the sabbath. Of these St. Mark records three—the cure of the demoniac at Capernaum, the cure of fever in the case of Peter's mother-in-law, and the cure of the withered hand; the former two recorded in the first chapter of this Gospel, and the last in the passage under consideration. Two more of the sabbath-day miracles are recorded by St. Luke—the cure of the woman afflicted with the spirit of infirmity, and also of the man who had the disease of dropsy; the former in the thirteenth and the latter in the fourteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel. Besides these, two more are recorded by St. John—the recovery of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, and the restoration of sight to the man born blind; the former in the fifth and the latter in the ninth chapter of St. John's Gospel. Our Lord had vindicated his disciples for plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath; he had now to vindicate himself for the miracle of healing, which he was about to perform also on the sabbath. The place where he was going to perform this miracle was the synagogue.

V. PERSONS PRESENT AT THE PERFORMANCE OF THE CURE. This is a most important item in the narrative, and a most important element in the transaction. There was a multitude present, and that multitude consisted of foes as well as friends. It could not, therefore, be said that the thing was done in a corner, or that it was done only in the presence of friends, with whom collusion or connivance might possibly be suspected. The persons, then, in whose presence this cure was effected were the worshippers on that sabbath day in the synagogue—a goodly number, no doubt, comprehending not only those who assembled ordinarily for the sabbath service, but many more drawn together by the rumours about the great Miracle-worker and in expectation of some manifestation of his wonder-working power. But besides these ordinary worshippers and these curiosity-mongers, as perhaps we may designate them, there were others—the scribes and Pharisees, as we learn from St. Luke—whose motive was malignancy, and whose business on that occasion was espionage. They kept watching our Lord closely and intently (*παρηρπουν*) to see if he should heal on the sabbath; not in admiration of his wondrous power, nor in gratitude for his marvellous goodness, but in order to find some ground of accusation against him.

VI. OBJECTION TO THE PERFORMANCE OF THE CURE ON THE SABBATH. In pursuance of their plan, they anticipated our Lord, as we learn from St. Matthew, with the question, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?" Our Lord, in reply, as we are informed in the same Gospel, appealed to their feelings of humanity and to the exercise of mercy which men usually extend even to a dumb animal—a sheep, which, if it fall into a pit on the sabbath, is laid hold of and lifted out. The superiority of a man to a sheep justifies a still greater exercise of mercy, even on the sabbath. But to their captious and ensnaring question he made further answer, replying, as was his wont, by a counter-question, "Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath day, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?" The alternative here is between doing good and doing evil, or, putting an extreme case, between saving a life and destroying it (*ἀπολέσαι* in St. Luke). We may observe, in passing, that the received text, which reads *τι* in this passage of St. Luke's Gospel, admits one or other of the two following renderings, according to the

punctuation: either (1) "I will ask you, further, *What is allowable on the sabbath—to do good or to do evil?*" or (2) "I will ask you, further, *a certain thing: Is it allowable on the sabbath to do good or to do evil?*" The first is favoured by being nearly the same as the Peshito-Syriac, which is to the effect, "I will ask you what is it allowable to do on the sabbath? What is good or what is bad?" But the critical editors, Lachmann, Tischendorf, and Tregelles, read *ei*, and the latter two have the present of the verb, viz. *ἐπερωτά*. Of course the translation of the text thus constituted is, "I ask you, further, *if* it is allowable on the sabbath to do good or to do evil—to save a life or to destroy?" With this the Vulgate coincides, as follows:—*Interrogo vos, si licet sabbatis benefacere an male: animam salvam facere, an perdere?* This was a home-thrust to these deceitful, wicked men who, while he was preparing to restore a human being to the full enjoyment of life in the unimpeded and unimpaired use of all his members, were murderously plotting the destruction of the great Physician's own life. No wonder they were silenced, as St. Mark tells us, for they must have been conscience-stricken, at least in some measure. At all events, they were confuted and confounded, but not converted, though they maintained a stolid, sullen silence. The question of our Lord left them in a dilemma. They could not deny that it was disallowable to do evil on any day, still more on the sabbath, for the holiness of the day aggravated the guilt; and yet they were seeking means of inflicting the greatest evil—even the destruction of life. They could not deny that it was allowable to do good on any day, especially on the sabbath; for the good deed, if not enhanced by, was fully in keeping with, the goodness of the day on which it was done. They found themselves shut up to the inevitable conclusion that it was not unlawful to do good on the sabbath day. And so our Lord turns to the performance of that good act on which he had determined, but which they in heart disallowed, notwithstanding their enforced silence or their seeming to give consent.

VII. MODE OF PREPARATION FOR THE CURE. He commanded the man who had his hand withered to stand forth. This was a somewhat trying ordeal for that poor disabled man. Standing forward, he became the gazing-stock of all eyes. He thereby made himself and his peculiar defect conspicuous. He thus practically confessed his helplessness and eagerness for relief. There he stood, an object of heartless curiosity to some, an object of contempt to others; the scrutinizing looks of some, the scowling glances of others, were fixed upon him. Few like to be thus looked out of countenance. Besides, in addition to all this, he was publicly expressing confidence in the ability of the Physician, and so exposing himself to like condemnation. And then there was the contingency of failure. What of that? The man must have had some, yea, much, moral courage to brave all this. Thus it is with all who will come to Christ with earnestness of spirit and manfully confess him. False shame must be laid aside. The scowl of enemies, perhaps the sneer of friends, the scorn of the world, may be calculated on and contemned; much must be done and dared in this direction. Yet the true confessor will not shrink from all this, and more. His spirit is—

"I'm not ashamed to own my Lord
Or to defend his cause,
Maintain the glory of his cross,
And honour all his laws."

VIII. OUR LORD'S LOOK WHEN PROCEEDING TO PERFORM THE CURE. The man was now standing forth in the midst, with the eyes of all present fastened on him. Our Lord, before actually speaking the word of healing power, looked round upon the persons present—upon *all* of them, as St. Luke informs us. There was deep meaning in that look. The expression of that look needed an interpreter, and so St. Mark tells us that the feelings which that intent and earnest look into every man's face gave expression to were twofold—there was anger and there was grief at the same time. This *anger* was righteous indignation; as the apostle says, "Be angry and sin not." This anger was incurred by the wicked malevolence which the Saviour, in his omniscience, read in the dark hearts of those dark-visaged men; for, as St. Luke reminds us, "he knew their thoughts," or rather their reasonings. But there was *grief* as well. 1. Though the compound verb *σπλαγχνόμενος* is interpreted by some as identical with the simple form, yet the prepositional element cannot be thus overlooked, but must add

somewhat to the meaning of the whole. 2. This additional significancy, however, may be variously understood. The preposition *σύν* may mean (1) that he grieved with and so within himself—in his own spirit; or (2) that his grief was simultaneous with his anger and accompanied it; or (3) that, angry though he was, he grieved nevertheless or sympathized with them. The ground of this complex feeling was the hardness of their hearts. The root-word denotes a kind of stone, then a chalkstone, also a *callus*, or substance exuding from fractured bones and joining their extremities; and the derivative noun, which occurs here, is the process of reuniting by a *callus*, then hardening, hardness, callousness; while the verb signifies to petrify, harden, or make callous. This hard-heartedness is thus a gradual, not an instantaneous, formation. It is a process which may commence with some small omission or trifling commission; but in either case it continues unless checked by grace—the once soft becoming hard, and the hard yet harder, till it is consummated in fearful obduracy of heart or complete callousness of the moral nature.

IX. THE CURE PERFORMED. "Stretch forth thy hand!" is the command; and as the acrost imperative, used here, generally denotes a speedy execution of the order given, like our phrase, "Have it done!" the command amounted to "Stretch forth thy hand at once!" How unreasonable this command, at the first blush of the matter, appears! Many a time the attempt had been made, but in vain; many a time before he had tried to stretch it out, but that withered hand had refused obedience to the volitions of the will. Was not the Saviour's command, then, strange and unnatural in bidding him extend a hand that had long lost the proper power of motion; a hand crippled and contracted in every joint, shrunken and shrivelled in every part—in a word, completely lifeless and motionless? And yet this man did not cavil nor question; he did not doubt nor delay. Soon as the mandate came he made the effort; soon as the command was uttered, hard as it must have seemed, he essayed compliance; and no sooner is compliance attempted than the cure is effected, Divine power accompanying the command, or rather both acting with simultaneous effect. Thus his word was a word of power, as we read, "He sent his word and healed them." And now the tendons are unbound, the nerves act, the muscles are supplied, the vital fluid flows once more along the reopened channel. Thus it was brought back again to what it once was; in power, appearance, and use it was restored to its original condition, whole and sound.

X. CONSEQUENT ON THE CURE WAS AN UNNATURAL COALITION. The enemies were filled with folly, wicked and senseless folly (*avoiās*), but not madness, as it is generally understood, for that would properly be *μωρίας*. They felt humiliated in the presence of so many people. Their pride was humbled, for they were silenced; their logic was shown to be shallow, for with them "to do or not to do"—that was the question; but our Lord showed them that "to do good or not to do good, while not to do good was tantamount to doing evil," was in reality the question; and so they were put to shame. They were disappointed, moreover, for they were deprived of any ground whereon to found an accusation, because, in the mode of effecting the cure, there had been no touch, no contact of any kind, no external means used—nothing but a word, so that even the letter of the Law had been in no way infringed. In their desperation they communed one with another, held a council, or, as St. Mark informs us more explicitly, "took or made counsel with the Herodians." Misfortune, according to an old saw, brings men into acquaintance with strange associates, and never more so than on this occasion. In theology the Herodians, as far as they held any theological opinions, fraternized with the Sadducees, the latitudinarians of that day; in politics they were adherents of Herod Antipas, and so advocates of the Roman domination. To both these the Pharisees were diametrically opposed. Yet now they enter into an unholy alliance with those who were at once their political opponents and religious antagonists. Nor was this the only time that extremes met and leagued themselves against Christ and his cause. Herod and Pilate mutually sacrificed their feelings of hostility, and confederated against the Lord and his Anointed. It has been thought strange that Luke, who from his acquaintance with Manaen, the foster-brother of Herod the Tetrarch, had special facilities for knowledge of the Herods, their family relations, and friends, omits this alliance of the Herodians with the Pharisees; while it has been surmised that, from that very acquaintance, sprang a delicacy of feeling that made the evangelist loth to record their hostility to Christ.

XI. LESSONS TO BE LEARNT FROM THIS SECTION. 1. The first lesson we learn here is the multitude of witnesses that are watching the movements of the disciples of Christ; for as it was with the Master so is it with ourselves. The eye of God is upon us, according to the language of ancient piety, "Thou God seest us;" the eyes of angels are upon us to aid us with their blessed and beneficent ministries; the eyes of good men are upon us to cheer us onward and help us forward; the eyes of bad men are upon us to mark our halting and take advantage of our errors; the eyes of Satan and his servants—evil angels as well as evil men—are upon us to entrap us by their machinations and gloat over our fall. How vigilant, then, must we be, watching and praying that we fall not into, nor succumb to, temptation! 2. In every case of spiritual withering we know the Physician to whom we must apply. Has our faith been withering, or has it lost aught of its freshness? we pray him to help our unbelief and increase our faith. Has our love been withering and languishing? we must seek from him a renewal of the love of our espousals, and meditate on him till in our hearts there is rekindled a flame of heavenly love to him who first loved us. Is our zeal for the Divine glory, or our activity in the Divine service, withering and decaying? then we must seek grace to repent and do our first works, stretching out at Christ's command the withered hand to Christian work, whether it be the resumption of neglected duty, or the rendering of needful help, or relieving the wants of the indigent, or wiping away the tears of the sorrowing, or usefulness of whatever kind in our day and generation, or honest endeavours to leave the world better than we found it. 3. It is well worthy of notice that if we are doing no good we are doing evil; nay, if we are doing nothing, we are doing evil; still more, if we are not engaged at least in helping to save, we are guilty of abetting, if not actually causing destruction. Let us, then, be "not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." 4. The mercifulness of the Saviour is an encouragement to faith and obedience. With his anger against sin was mingled grief for sinners' hardness of heart. Many a tear he shed for perishing souls in the days of his flesh. He dropped a tear at the grave of a beloved friend—only dropped a silent tear (*ἔδκρυψε*); but over the impenitent inhabitants of a doomed city his eyes brimmed over with tears and he wept aloud, for we there read *ἐκλαυσε*. In this restoration of the withered hand we have evidence of the Saviour's gracious disposition, a warrant to take him at his word, and a guarantee that when he gives a precept he will grant power for its performance. 5. Divine power was here displayed in human weakness. The sinner has a warrant to believe, and in responding to that warrant he realizes Divine help; in his willingness to obey he experiences Divine power; in his earnest entreating Christ for strength to believe, he is actually and already exercising a reliance on Christ for salvation. Divine power harmonized with the faith of this afflicted man, and the Saviour's strength made itself manifest in his obedience. And yet faith lays claim to no inherent power; it is, on the contrary, human weakness laying hold of Divine strength. Its potency is derived entirely from that on which it rests; believing the Word of God, trusting in the Son of God, relying on aid from the Spirit of God, it surmounts every obstacle, overcomes every difficulty, and triumphs over every enemy. It is a principle that develops most wonderful potencies for good; in its exercise we cross the borderland that lies between the humanly impossible and heavenly possibilities; for "what is the victory that overcometh the world? Even our faith."—J. J. G.

Vers. 7—12. Parallel passage: Matt. xii. 15—21.—*Popularity of Christ on the increase.* I. THE POPULARITY OF JESUS. It was ever increasing, as is proved by this passage. A great multitude followed him from Galilee in the north; from Judæa and its capital in a central position; and from Idumæa in the far south, situated as it was between Judæa, Arabia, and Egypt; then from Peræa, east of the Jordan; the people of Tyre and Sidon also in the north-west;—all these, attracted by the fame of what Jesus was doing, flocked unto him. So great were the multitude and pressure that he directed his disciples to procure a little boat to keep close to him in order to escape the crowding (*διὰ τὸν ὄχλον*) and consequent confusion.

II. HIS POWER TO HEAL. This appears to be as yet the main attraction. The miracles of healing were abundant, so much so that the afflicted sufferers actually fell against him (*ἐπιπνέον*), that by the contact their plagues might be removed. Unclean spirits also wherever they saw him, kept falling down before him, crying out, "Thou art the Son of God."

III. PECULIARITY OF THE SYRIAC VERSION IN THIS PLACE. It strangely combines the two last classes in its rendering, namely, "Those that had plagues of unclean spirits, as often as they saw him, kept falling down before him." Our Lord, however, invariably reprobated and rejected their testimony, as if there were something insidious in it or injurious to his cause.

IV. THE PHYSICAL HEALTH RESTORED TO SO MANY AFFLICTED BODIES WAS A GUARANTEE OF SPIRITUAL HEALTH FOR THE SOUL. In all the ages, and in all the annals of medical science, and in all the countries of the world, we have account of one Physician, and only one, who was able to lay his hand on the aching head and diseased heart of suffering humanity, bringing immediate cure and effectual relief. No malady could resist his healing power, no sickness withstand his touch, and no illness remain incurable once he but spoke the word. No disease, however deep-seated in the system, or deadly in its nature, or inveterate from long duration, could baffle his skill or defy his power. Whether it was palsy, or dropsy, or asthma, or convulsions, or ulceration, or bloody issue, or fever, or even consumption, or, what was still worse, leprosy itself,—whatever the form of disease might be, he cured it. Persons labouring under organic defects—the deaf, the dumb, the blind, the lame—were brought to him, and he removed all those defects. Mental ailments also, as lunacy and demoniacal possession, all were relieved by him. Sometimes it was a word, sometimes a touch, again some external appliance, not as a remedy but to act as a conductor, or to show a connection instituted between the operator and the patient, but, whatever was the plan adopted, the power never failed to produce the desired effect. Now, whatever he did in this way to the body is proof positive of his ability and willingness to do the same and more for the soul. We may be diseased with sin so as to be loathsome in our own eyes and morally infectious to our neighbours and acquaintances; we may be leprous with sin so as to be cut off from the fellowship of the saints and the communion of the holy; we may be under the ban of man and the curse of heaven; yet if we approach this great Physician of soul as well as body, confiding in his power and trusting in his mercy, we shall obtain, and that without fail, healing and health for our diseased spirits and sin-sick souls. Thousands alive this day can testify from actual happy experience to the healing power of Jesus' word, the cleansing efficacy of his blood, and the renewing, purifying, and sanctifying influences of his Spirit. Millions this day in the realms of bliss above are enjoying the health and the happiness, the brightness and the beauty, the purity and perfection of that upper sanctuary, though on earth the diseases of their souls had been of the most desperate character—utterly incurable had it not been for the mercy and grace of this great Physician. And he is still the same—"the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever," and able as ever to "save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him."

V. A RECONCILIATION. It is thought by some that a discrepancy exists between the fourth verse of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah and the seventeenth verse of the eighth chapter of St. Matthew. But if we take the first clause of each verse as referring to bodily diseases, and the second clause to the diseases of the mind or soul, we shall have an instructive harmony in place of an insuperable difficulty or seeming discrepancy. The verbs will then be most suitable and appropriate: the *nasu* of the Hebrew, being general in its meaning, to take up in any way, or to take up in order to take away, will correspond in its generality of signification to *ἐλαβε*, to take in any way; while *saval*, for which *ἐβάρασε* of St. Matthew is an exact equivalent, is to bear as a burden. "Thus," says Archbishop Magee, in his invaluable work on the Atonement, "are Isaiah and Matthew perfectly reconciled; the first clause in each relating to *diseases removed*, and the second to *sufferings endured*." Thus too there is a close correlation between the removal of the diseases of the body and the expiation of the sins of our souls.—J. J. G.

Vers. 13—19. Parallel passages: Matt. x. 2—4; Luke vi. 12—19.—*The choosing of the twelve.* 1. THE CHOICE AND ITS OBJECT. The Saviour ascends the mountain that was near at hand, probably *Karun Hattin*, "and calls to him whom he wished." At once they went off away (*ἔειδ*), leaving other things, and turning to him as their sole object. Of these he appointed, or ordained—though the original word is more simple, viz. "he made"—twelve for a threefold purpose: (1) to "be with him," to keep him

company, assisting him and sympathizing with him; (2) to be his messengers to men, heralding the good news of salvation; and (3) to alleviate miraculously human misery—curing diseases and expelling demons.

II. THE LIST OF NAMES. The order and meaning of the names require only a few remarks. The twelve are distributed into three classes. Simon, the Hearer, whom our Lord surnamed the Rock-man, heads the first class; next to him were James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, both of whom were surnamed Boanerges, "Sons of Thunder," that is, *bene* (or equivalent to *e*) *regesh*; and Andrew. The second class is headed by Philip; then comes Bartholomew, which means the son of Tolmai, the word being a patronymic—in all probability the person meant was Nathanael, the proper name of the same; also Matthew and Thomas. The third class begins with James the son of Alphæus; then Judas, surnamed Thaddæus, or Lebbaeus, the Courageous; and Simon the Kananite, that is, the Zealot, not a Canaanite; while Judas Iscariot, that is, the man of Kerioth, the traitor, is the last in every list.—J. J. G.

Vers. 20—30. Parallel passages: Matt. xii. 22—37; Luke xi. 14—23.—*Mistaken friends and malignant foes.* I. *MISTAKEN FRIENDS.* 1. *The connection.* Between the appointment of the apostles and the transactions here narrated several important matters intervened. There was the sermon on the mount, recorded in the Gospel of St. Matthew, chs. v.—vii.; and an abridgment or modification of the same repeated in the Gospel of St. Luke, ch. vi. 17—49. Next followed the events recorded throughout the seventh chapter of St. Luke, and which were as follows:—The cure of the centurion's servant; the restoration to life of the widow's son of Nain; the message sent by John the Baptist; the dinner in the house of Simon, with the anointing by a woman who had been a sinner. Previously to this last had been the doom pronounced on the impenitent cities, narrated by St. Matthew in ch. xi. towards the end; the second circuit through Galilee, of which we read in Luke viii., at the beginning; while immediately before, and indeed leading to, the circumstances mentioned in this section was the healing of a blind and dumb demoniac. 2. *The concourse.* Our Lord had just returned, not into the house of some believer, as Euthymius thinks; nor into the house in which he made his abode while at Capernaum, as this meaning would require the article; but more generally, "to home," as in ch. ii. 1. And no sooner is his return reported than he is followed by a great concourse of people. Again a crowd, as on several previous occasions, especially that mentioned in ch. ii. 2, when "there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door," pressed after him. Such was the curiosity of the crowd, and so great their eagerness, that no opportunity was allowed our Lord and his apostles to enjoy their ordinary repasts; "they could not so much as eat bread." This rendering corresponds to that of the Peshito, which omits the second and strengthening negative, for, while in Greek a negative is neutralized by a subsequent *simple* negative of the same kind, it is continued and intensified by a following *compound* negative of the same kind. The meaning, therefore, is stronger, whether we read $\mu\eta\tau\epsilon$ or $\mu\eta\delta\acute{\epsilon}$; thus, "They were able, no, not ($\mu\eta\tau\epsilon$) to eat bread;" or, stronger still, "They could not even ($\mu\eta\delta\acute{\epsilon}$) eat bread," much less find leisure to attend to anything else: though, it may be observed in passing, if $\mu\eta\tau\epsilon$ were the right reading, the meaning would rather be that they were neither able nor did eat bread. In fact, the crowd was so great, so continuous, so obtrusive, that no time was allowed our Lord and his apostles for their ordinary and necessary meals. From this we learn that our Lord's popularity was steadily as well as rapidly increasing, and that the excitement, instead of diminishing, was daily, nay, hourly, intensifying. 3. *The concern of our Lord's kinsfolk.* Hearing of this wonderful excitement which the presence of Jesus was everywhere occasioning, his friends or kinsmen were alarmed by the circumstance; and, dreading the effect of such excitement upon his physical constitution—fearing, no doubt, that he might be carried away by his enthusiasm and zeal beyond the measure of his bodily strength, and even to the detriment of his mental powers—our Lord's relations went forth to check his excessive efforts and repress his superabundant ardour. The statement is either general, that is to say, "they went forth," or it may be understood in the stricter sense of their coming out of their place of abode, probably Nazareth, or possibly Capernaum. The expression, $\text{o}\iota\ \pi\alpha\tau\epsilon\text{r}\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$, according to ordinary usage, would mean persons sent by him or away from him, as $\text{o}\iota\ \pi\alpha\alpha\kappa\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \text{N}\iota\kappa\iota\omicron\upsilon$, in Thucydides, is

"the messengers of Nician." But the expression cannot mean (1) his *apostles*, who though sent out by him and selected for this purpose, as we read in ver. 14, were now with him in the house; nor can it mean (2) his *disciples*, or those about him, for this would confound the expression with *οἱ περὶ αὐτόν*. It must, it appears, be taken to signify his kinsmen—the sense assigned to it by most commentators, ancient and modern. And, though this is a rare use of the expression, it is not quite without parallels, as for example in Susanna, ver. 33, *ἐκλαίον δὲ οἱ παρ' αὐτῆς*, "but her friends wept;" and in this Gospel, ch. v. 26, *τὰ παρ' αὐτῆς πάντα* is "all the things from with her," that is, all her resources—"all her living," as we read in the parallel passage of St. Luke. 4. *Their course of action.* We have now to consider their course of action or mode of procedure, and the object which they had in view. They went out to lay hold of him, and so (1) to put him under salutary restraint, if the literal meaning of supposed derangement be adhered to. It may indeed mean (2) to hold him back from such superhuman efforts, in consequence of their believing him to be in an unnatural and abnormal state of mind or body, or both. But, though the word rendered "he is beside himself" is often used in that sense, sometimes elliptically as here and in 2 Cor. v. 13, but mostly in conjunction with *νοῦ*, or *γνώμης*, or *φρενῶν*, and so equivalent to *παρὰφρονεῖν*, still it may be employed figuratively, and merely import that he was transported too far. What with the watchings of the precealing night, and the fastings of that morning, and his unceasing labours in addressing his newly chosen apostles, preaching to the people, and working miracles, all of which we learn, by a comparison with the sixth chapter of St. Luke, both mind and body must have been taxed to the utmost, the strain was excessive, they thought, and far too great to be long borne; and so an earnest but friendly interference was deemed by them to be necessary. There is, however, (3) another view of the matter, which some prefer. They understand the word *ἐξέστη* as equivalent to *ἐλειποθύμῃσε* or *ἐλειποθύχῃσε*, and to denote fainting from bodily exhaustion, and consequently the object of his kinsfolk was to support and sustain him (*κρατῆσαι*). But some resort to the still more questionable expedient of changing the object of the verb just mentioned, and so understanding (4) that his disciples went out to repress the crowd, for they (*i.e.* the disciples) said, "It [the crowd] is mad." This last (4) view is untenable; the preceding one (3) is not well supported; the one going before it (2) is plausible, but rather specious than sound; while the first (1) alone, notwithstanding the difficulty it presents in connection with our Lord's relatives, is the plain and natural meaning of the expression. 5. *Their confined notions of religion.* It is painfully manifest that the kinsfolk of our Lord entertained very contracted and very commonplace, or rather indeed low, ideas of religion. They were very imperfectly acquainted with the great object of Jesus' mission; their notions of his work were of the crudest kind; their faith, if at this period it existed at all, must have been in a very incipient state. Their anxiety at the same time for his safety, and their alarm at the public agitation and the probable upshot of that agitation, all combined to force on them the conclusion that he was on the border between fanaticism and frenzy, or that he had actually made the transition into the region of the latter. 6. *A common experience.* We find in this mistake no new or very strange experience. The Rev. Rowland Hill, on one occasion, strained his voice, raising it to the highest pitch, in order to warn some persons of impending danger, and so rescued them from peril. For this he was warmly applauded, as he deserved. But when he elevated his voice to a similar pitch in warning sinners of the error and evil of their ways, and in order to save their souls from a still greater peril, the same friends who before had praised him now pronounced him fool and fanatic.

II. MALIGNANT FOES. 1. *The charge of the scribes.* The evangelist never suppresses truth; he keeps nothing back, however harsh or unnatural it may at first sight appear. Having shown the effect of the Saviour's ministry on his friends, he proceeds to exhibit the impression it made on his foes. A notable miracle had been performed, as we learn from St. Matthew's Gospel, ch. xii. 22, a blind and dumb demoniac—sad complication—had been cured. Now, there are two ways in which men diminish the merit of a good quality, and destroy the credit of a noble action—denial is the one, and depreciation is the other. The scribes, or theologians, of the Pharisaic sect, had come down as emissaries from the metropolis, to dog our Saviour's steps and destroy. If they could, his influence. Had denial of the miracle been possible, it is plain they

would have adopted that course; but facts are stubborn things, and denial in the face of facts is impossible. The miracle was too plain, too palpable, and too public to admit denial. The next best thing for their nefarious purpose was depreciation or detraction. "He casteth out devils," they say—they could not deny this; "but he hath Beelzebub, and in union (ἐν) with him, or by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils," or rather "demons," as we have already seen. Beelzebub was the god of Ekron, and got this name from the supposed power which he possessed to ward off flies, like the Latin *averrunci* or the Greek ἀπορρώταις, who were named *averters*, which those words signify, as though they possessed the power of averting disease or pestilence from their worshippers. But the name Beelzebub was changed, contemptuously and insultingly no doubt, into Beelzebul, the god of dung; nor is the affinity between the god of flies and the god of the dunghill difficult to discover, while the filth of idolatry is not obscurely implied. Now, this name was given to the evil one, whose proper name is either Satan the adversary, in Hebrew, or Diabolos the accuser, in Greek. Other names he also bears, such as "prince of darkness," "prince of the power of the air," "the tempter," "the God of this world," "the old serpent," "the dragon," and Belial. All of these, more or less indicate his hostility to God and man, his opposition to all good, and instigation to all evil. 2. *Confutation*. The Saviour refutes this charge by four different arguments. The first argument is an appeal to common sense, the second is *ad absurdum*, the third is *ad hominem*, and the fourth from human experience. The first (1) points out the fact that the stability of a kingdom, or the success of a family depends on unity and peace; as the proverb has it, "Concordia res parvæ crescunt, discordia maximæ dilabuntur." So the kingdom or family of demons would perish by dissensions. Again (2), "if Satan cast out Satan"—not "if one Satan cast out another Satan," which is the rendering of some, but, "if Satan cast himself out," his policy is suicidal. He had by his demons taken possession of men's bodies, and thereby exercised his power over his victims; but if he countenanced or combined with the Saviour in casting out these demons, he was destroying his own subjects and diminishing his own power. Thus his kingdom, like many another and many a better, "could not stand," or rather "could not be made to stand" (σταθῆναι), or, as the other synoptists express it, "it is brought to desolation" (ἐρηνοῦνται); and, in that case, "house falleth against house," according to Meyer's rendering of the parallel expression in St. Luke, or, as it stands in the Authorized Version, "a house divided against a house falleth." The conditional proposition in reference to kingdom and house is of that kind which denotes probable contingency, not a mere supposition; but that applied to Satan rising up against himself implies possibility without any expression of uncertainty. Why is this? How can we account for this somewhat striking difference? Because in the former case civil commotions may distract a kingdom, and an unhappy feud may divide a family or household. Such things have occurred; and it is likely enough that they may occur again, and so their occurrence comes within the limits of probability. But, according to the supposition or imputation of the scribes, the thing has already actually occurred, and Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided. Such suicidal policy it would be utterly absurd to attribute to a power so subtle as Satan, unless, indeed, he be supposed to be possessed of less than ordinary worldly prudence. He now turns (3) to another line of argument which comes home to them more closely. This argument, though omitted by St. Mark, is found in both St. Matthew and St. Luke, and is the following:—"And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children ['sons,' in St. Luke] cast them out?" This they assumed to do, as we learn from Acts xix. 13, 14, "Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so." Our Lord, in his reasoning and for the purpose of his argument, employs the fact of the assumption which they made, without necessarily admitting the reality of their accomplishing what they pretended. If they were asked by what power or whose aid their sons cast out or took upon them to cast out devils? by Beelzebub or by the Spirit? he knew well what their answer would be, and that they would not acknowledge their children to be leagued with Satan in casting out devils, but that they would contend for the co-operation of Divine power. If, then, our Lord would say, you impute that power which I exert to Beelzebub, and

that same power of which they claim the exercise to God, they will be your judges, and condemn you of hostility to me, while you are guilty of such partiality to themselves. There was no escaping from this argument. But he urges (4) yet another argument—one from human experience: How can I rob Satan of his subjects until I have conquered him? And how can I, besides, distribute the spoils of victory unless that conquest be complete? His enemies had accused him of being in alliance with Satan; he argues on the contrary that, instead of being an ally of Satan, he has made open war on him and bound him, invaded his dominions, subdued his subjects, having first overpowered their prince.

III. PICTURE OF SATAN. 1. *His power.* He is the strong man. He is strong in his principedom. He is "prince of the power of the air;" that is, chieftain of those powerful spirits that have their residence in the air. He is strong in his power to destroy, and hence he is called Apollyon, or Abaddon, the destroyer. By his powerful temptations he destroyed the happiness of our first parents and ruined their race. He is strong in the power of cunning. Oh, how subtle, how insidious, how cunning, in his work of destruction! "We are not ignorant," says the apostle, "of his devices." He is strong in the power of calumny, and consequently he is called "the accuser of the brethren," while his accusations are founded on falsehood. He maligned the patriarch of Uz, upright and perfect though he was, misrepresenting that good man's principles and practice and patience. He is strong in the sovereignty which he exercises over his subjects, and strong in the multitude of those subjects, leading thousands, yea, millions, of men and women captive at his will, and enslaving them with his hellish yoke. He is strong in the fearfully despotic power with which he controls the souls and bodies of his slaves; and every sinner is his slave, and, what is worse, a willing slave, so that, though we urge them by the tenderest motives, address to them the most solemn warnings, allure them by the most precious promises, and appeal to them by the most valuable interests, thousands reject all our overtures, preferring to go on and continue, to live and die, in slavish subjection to the complete control and terrible power of Satan—this strong man. 2. *His palace and property.* St. Luke is fuller in his description here. He speaks of his complete armour, his panoply; he speaks of his palace, the other synoptists speak of his house; he speaks of his goods and of those goods as spoils, the other two speak of his vessels. They all tell us of one stronger than the strong one. St. Luke again tells us that, though the strong man is armed *cap-à-pie*, and stands warder of his own palace, and keeps his goods in security, yet that he who is stronger than the strong one, having effected an entrance, overcomes him, strips him of his armour in which he reposed such confidence, and distributes his spoils; while the other two Evangelists tell us that, having entered the strong man's dwelling, he binds the strong man, and plunders, taking as a prey both his house and his vessels—the container and the contained. The groundwork of the description is to be found, perhaps, in Isa. xlix. 24, 25, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children." But what are we to understand by these particulars? The strong man is Satan, the stronger than the strong man is our blessed Saviour; this world is his palace or house; his goods in general and vessels in particular which are made spoils of are inferior demons according to some, or men according to others, rather both, as Chrysostom explains the meaning when he says, "Not only are demons vessels of the devil, but men also who do his work." In a still narrower sense, man or man's heart is the palace, and its powers and affections are the goods. The heart of man was once a palace, a princely dwelling, worthy of and intended for the habitation of God. But that palace is now in ruins. We have gazed on a ruined palace; and oh, how sad the sight! Its chambers are dismantled, its columns are prostrate, its arches are broken; fragments of the once stately fabric are scattered about. Ivy twines round its ruined walls, grass grows in its halls, weeds and nettles cover the courtyard. Owls look out of the apertures that once were windows, or hoot in melancholy mood to their fellows. Mounds of earth or heaps of rubbish occupy the apartments once grand and gorgeous. The whole is a sad though striking picture of decay, desolation, and death. Just such a place is the heart of man. It was a palace once; it is a palace still, but the palace is now in ruins, and over these ruins

Satan rules and reigns. But what are the *goods*, or *vessels*, or *spoils*? If the unrenewed heart itself be the palace where Satan resides, and which he has made his dwelling, then the powers of that heart—for the Hebrews referred to the heart what we attribute to the head—its faculties so noble, its feelings so tender, its affections so precious, are Satan's goods, for he uses them for his own purposes; they are his vessels, for he employs them in his work and service; they are his spoils, for he has usurped authority over them. His, no doubt, they are by right of conquest, if might ever makes right. He is not only a possessor, but wields over them the power of a sovereign. He is enthroned in the sinner's heart, and exalted to a chief place in his affections. Accordingly, he receives the homage of his intellect, he claims and gets the ready service of his will, he controls the actions of the life; and thus over head and heart and life he sways his sceptre, exercising unlimited and incessant control. To one faculty or feeling he says, "Come," and it cometh; to another power or principle of action he says, "Go," and it goeth. 3. *His possession, and how he keeps it.* In the heart of man there are what Ezekiel calls "chambers of imagery." These chambers of imagery in the human heart are of themselves dark enough and dreary enough; but Satan, if we yield to him and resist him not, for he cannot control us without our consent or coerce us against our consent, will curtain those chambers with *darkness*—spiritual darkness. As long as he can keep us in the darkness of ignorance—ignorance of God, of Christ, of the way of salvation, of ourselves, of our slavery, of our responsibility, of our danger, and of our duty—he is secure in his possession. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." By subtlety and stratagem, by wiles and wickedness, he holds possession of those chambers, actually furnishing them with his own hand, while the furniture thus supplied consists of *delusions*—strong delusions, sinful delusions. Even the pictures on the walls are painted by him; scenes base and bad, wicked and abominable, are there portrayed to pervert the judgment and incline it to what is perverse, to debase the imagination with visions foul and filthy, to inflame the affections with objects indelicate and impure. Another effectual way in which Satan holds possession of the palace of man's heart is by keeping it under the influence of *sense*. He occupies men with the things of sense and sight, to the neglect of things spiritual and eternal; he employs them with material objects and worldly interests; he amuses them with the trifles of the present time, to the neglect of the interests of the never-ending future; he engrosses our attention with worldliness, vanity, and pride—things sensual, earthly, and perishable; thoughts about the body and its wants are pressed on men, to the neglect of the soul and its necessities. Such questions as, "What shall I eat, or what shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed?" are ever present, while the vastly more important question, "What must I do to be saved?" is lost sight of or left in abeyance. Present profits and worldly pursuits absorb attention, to the neglect of present responsibilities and future realities; the pleasures of sin, short-lived and unsatisfactory as they are sure to prove, divert men's thoughts from those "pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore." But, as the Word of God warns us of Satan's devices that we may be on our guard against them, it may not be amiss to pay the more particular attention to them. Another way by which he holds possession of the palace of what Bunyan calls Mansoul is *delay*. This is a favourite method, and one specially successful with the young. "Time enough yet," Satan whispers into the young ear, and the inexperienced heart of youth is too ready to believe the falsehood. He persuades them into the belief that it is too soon for such grave subjects, too early to engage in such solemn reflections. Many other and even better opportunities, they are induced to think, will be afforded; they are yet young and strong, and with a keen zest for youthful pleasures, and the world is all before them. Every year the delay becomes more difficult to break away from, and the delusion the more dangerous; and while the difficulty as well as the danger increases, the strength of the sinner, or his power to overcome the suggestions of Satan, decreases. A more convenient season is expected, and thus procrastination becomes, as usual, "the thief of time; year after year it steals till all is past, and to the mercies of a moment leaves the vast concerns of an eternal scene." But to delay succeeds at length another means by which he keeps possession, and that other means, in one respect the opposite, is *despair*. Thus extremes meet. Satan had long flattered them with the

delusive fancy that it was too soon; now he drives them to the desperate notion that it is too late. Once he flattered them with the false hope of a long and happy future, with death in the remote distance, and with means of grace not only ample but abundant, and power at pleasure to turn to God; now he tortures them with the thought that the day of grace is gone, irrevocably gone. Once he made them believe that the time to break up their fallow ground and sow to themselves in righteousness had not yet come; now, on the contrary, he induces the belief that "the harvest is past, the summer ended, and their souls not saved. Once he deluded them with the thought that sin was only a trifle, and they were willing to lay to their soul the false unction that sin was too small a matter to incur the wrath of Heaven; now he prompts the despairing thought that their sin is too great to be forgiven, and their guilt too heinous to be ever blotted out. 4. *The peace he produces.* All the while he produces a sort of peace; all the while "his goods are in peace;" all the while sinners are promising themselves "peace, peace; but there is no peace," saith God, "to the wicked." Satan may promise, and even produce, a kind of peace; but that peace is perilous—it is a false peace. He may lead them into a sort of calm, but it is the lull before the storm; he may amuse them with a species of quietude, but it is the sure forerunner of the fast-approaching hurricane. The only true peace is that which the Spirit bestows—a "peace that passeth all understanding," a peace which the world with all its wealth cannot give, and with all its wickedness cannot take away. This peace is compared to a river: "Then shall thy peace be as a river"—a river broad and beautiful, glancing in the bright sunshine of the heaven above, and reflecting the varied beauties along its banks; a river deepening and widening at every reach, bearing health and fertility throughout its course, broadening out and expanding at last into the boundless, shoreless ocean of everlasting bliss. 5. *Satan's defeat and dispossession.* Though Satan be strong, there is One stronger than he—One "mighty to save," even from his grasp, and "lead captivity captive." That stronger One is the mighty Saviour, whose mission of mercy was meant to take the prey from the mighty, to bruise his head and destroy his works, and so rescue man from the thralldom of Satan and the dominion of sin. Himself mightier than the mighty, he is "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." St. Luke informs us of the manner in which he effects the great emancipation. He comes upon him (*ἐπελθὼν*) both suddenly and by way of hostile attack. He comes upon him suddenly, and so takes him by *surprise*. Satan's goods are meantime in peace, and he fancies he has it all his own way, and that for ever. The Saviour comes upon the heart enslaved by Satan with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word and *truth* of God, and immediately the chains are burst asunder and the shackles fall off. Henceforth it enjoys that freedom with which Christ makes his people free. He comes upon the sinner's soul with the *power* of the Spirit, convincing of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. The Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to the sinner, and so the truth is brought home to the heart and conscience; not in word only, "but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." He comes upon the sinner, whose powers lay dormant, or rather "dead in trespasses and sins," and he awakens the powers that thus lay dormant, and quickens the soul, it may be long dead, into new spiritual *life*, and makes it "alive unto God through Christ Jesus." But with life comes *light*. Soon as the life-giving Spirit operates upon the mass erewhile chaotic and dead, living forces are developed, and light springs up; the light of the glorious gospel of the grace of God shines through all that heart, however dead and dark it had been before. Every soul thus awakened, enlightened, quickened, and truly converted to God, is a victory of the Saviour over Satan—a trophy snatched from the strong one by him who thus proves himself stronger than the strong man. Every such one is evidence of Satan's defeat, and proves the destruction of his power, as also his expulsion from his usurped dominion—a thorough and blessed dispossession of the spirit of evil. 6. *Satan's armour.* His offensive weapons are his snares, his devices, his wiles, his lies, his lusts; of all these we read in Scripture. But he has other armour; and, as panoply has its root in *ἐπαινος*, or "thing moved about," as the shield, from *ἐπίστυλον*, according to Donaldson, the reference may rather be to defensive armour. The parts of this armour may be regarded as consisting of our ignorance of God and hatred of him, our unbelief and ungodliness, hardness of heart and unrighteousness. Theophylact explains Satan's armour to be made of our

sins in general; his words are πάντα τὰ εἶδη τῆς ἁμαρτίας, αὕτη γὰρ ὄπλα τοῦ Διαβόλου, equivalent to "All forms of sin, for this is the arms of the devil." By such armour he defends his possessions and maintains his interest in them; by such armour he repels all attacks on his goods, opposing the impressions of the Divine Word, the influences of the Holy Spirit, and the leadings of God's providence. Christ captures his arms when he enables us to guard against his devices and wiles, to avoid his snares, to discredit his lies, shun his lusts, and resist his temptations. Further, he takes from Satan the armour in which he places such confidence when he breaks the power of sin in the soul, opens men's eyes to the perils that surround them, regenerates the heart, and renews the life, humbles their spirit, rectifies their errors, checks their corruption, and, in a word, bruises Satan under their feet. 7. *Division of the spoils.* This is usually the consequence of conquest. When Satan led the sinner captive and made him his prey, he took him with all he is and all he has for his spoil, employing all his endowments of mind and energies of body, his time, his talents, his health, his influence, his estate, small or great, in his service. But again, in the day of the sinner's conversion to God, not only is Satan defeated and dispossessed, Christ recovers the long-lost possession—all of it for himself. He regains those energies and endowments, that time, those talents, that influence; he restores all to their right use and to the great end for which they were intended. The whole man—body, soul, and spirit—is brought back to the service of his Maker, and every thought becomes subject to the law of Jesus Christ. Further, the Saviour not only regains those spoils and recovers them for himself, but also, like a great and good Captain, he divides them among his followers. In every case when he defeats, disarms, and dispossesses Satan, Christ shares with his soldiers—his servants—the spoils consequent on victory. The sinner thus rescued is blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus;" but he is not only blessed in his own soul, he is made a blessing to all around. He becomes a blessing to friend and fellow-man. In this way the spoil is divided and the blessing distributed. He becomes a proof of Divine power and a pattern of purity to an ungodly world; while his talents, be they many or few—ten, or five, or one—are employed for the good of Christ's Church, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the edification of the body of Christ." To sinners he serves as a beacon-light to warn them of the sunken rocks or breakers ahead, and to direct their course into the haven of heavenly rest. A curious and not uninteresting exposition by Theophylact of the distribution of the spoils is to this effect, that men, being the spoils first taken by Satan, and then retaken by Christ, the Saviour distributes them, giving one to one angel and another to another angel as a faithful guardian, that, instead of the demon that lorded it over him, an angel may now have him in safe keeping—of course, in order to be his guide and guard him. 8. *Practical lessons.* (1) The sinner still in the power of the strong man should cry mightily to Christ to rescue him from such base servitude, and deliver him from such dreadful drudgery. He, and he alone, can free him from enslavement, because he is stronger than the strong man. (2) The saint already delivered, while still to be on his guard against Satan, has nothing to fear from his assaults. He can never again regain possession, for he is vanquished, and the means of retrieving his lost possessions and forfeited power are for ever wrested from him. If he goes out of himself without being dislodged, he is sure to return and resume possession with increased forces and power, as the parable which follows in St. Luke teaches. (3) The believer is bound to bless his deliverer, which he may suitably do in the words—

"Thou hast, O Lord most glorious,
 Ascended up on high;
 And in triumph victorious led
 Captive captivity. . . .
 Bless'd be the Lord, who is to us
 Of our salvation God;
 Who daily with his benefits
 Us plenteously doth load."

(4) Neutrality in this cause is criminal. If we are not on Christ's side, contending against Satan, we evince our unwillingness that his kingdom should be destroyed; and if not engaged in seeking to bring subjects into Christ's kingdom, as a shepherd

collects his flock and pens them in the fold, we are scattering the sheep away from and leaving them without the place of safety.

IV. THE BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST. 1. *Patristic explanations of this sin.* Some have understood it of *apostasy* in time of persecution. This was the opinion of Cyprian (A.D. 248), who says, in 'Epist.' xvi., that "It was a very great crime which persecution compelled men to commit, as they themselves know who have committed it, inasmuch as our Lord and Judge has said, 'Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father who is in heaven. But he that denieth me, him will I also deny.' And again, 'All sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven to the sons of men: but he that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, shall not have forgiveness, but is guilty of eternal sin' (*reus est eterni peccati*)."

Some understand it of the *denial of the divinity* of our Lord, as Athanasius (A.D. 326), who says that "the Pharisees in the Saviour's time, and the Arians in our days, running into the same madness, denied the real Word to be incarnate, and ascribed the works of the Godhead to the devil and his angels, and therefore justly undergo the punishment which is due to this impiety, without remission. For they put the devil in the place of God, and imagined the works of the living and true God to be nothing more than the works of the devil." And elsewhere the same Father says, "They who spake against Christ, considering him only as the Son of man, were pardonable, because in the beginning of the gospel the world looked upon him only as a prophet, not as God, but as the Son of man: but they who blasphemed his divinity after his works had demonstrated him to be God, had no forgiveness, so long as they continued in this blasphemy; but if they repented they might obtain pardon: for there is no sin unpardonable with God to them who truly and worthily repent." Others again have understood it to consist in the denial of the divinity of the Holy Ghost. Thus Epiphanius (A.D. 368) charged with this sin the Macedonian heretics, because they opposed the Godhead of the Holy Spirit, making him a mere creature. In like manner Ambrose (A.D. 374) accused these same heretics of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, because they denied his divinity.

2. *The two most important patristic authorities on this subject.* These are Chrysostom (A.D. 388) among the Greek Fathers, and Augustine (A.D. 396) of the Latin Fathers; both near the close of the fourth century. The former on the *nature* of the sin itself says, "For though you say that you know me not, you are surely not ignorant of that also, that to expel demons and cure diseases are the work of the Holy Spirit. Not only, then, do you insult me, but the Holy Spirit also. Therefore your punishment is inevitable both here and hereafter." Again, in reference to the *unpardonableness* of this sin, he says, "'Ye have said many things against me—that I am a deceiver, that I am an opponent of God. These things I forgive you on your repentance, and I do not exact punishment of you; but the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven even to the penitent.' And how could this have reason, for truly even this sin was forgiven to persons repenting? Many, then, of those who said these things believed afterwards, and all was forgiven them. What, then, does he mean? That this sin above all is least capable of pardon. Why at all? Because they were ignorant who Christ was; but of the Holy Spirit they had had sufficient proof. For truly the prophets spake by him what they did speak, and all in the old dispensation had had abundant knowledge of him. What he means then is this: 'Grant it, you stumble at me because of the garb of flesh I have assumed; can you also say about the Holy Spirit that you are ignorant of him? Therefore this blasphemy shall not be forgiven you; both here and there you shall suffer punishment.'"

Further on he proceeds to say, "For truly some men are punished both here and there; others only here; others only there; while others neither here nor there. *Here and there*, as these very persons (*i.e.* the Pharisees), for truly both here they suffered punishment when they endured those irremediable sufferings at the capture of their city; and there they shall undergo the most severe punishment, as the inhabitants of Sodom, and as many others. But *there only*, as that rich man when tortured in flames was not master of even a drop of water. Some *only here*, as the person who had committed fornication among the Corinthians. Others again, *neither here nor there*, as the apostles, as the prophets, and as the blessed Job; for what they suffered did not belong to punishment, but was exercises and conflicts." The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is, according to Chrysostom, greater than the sin against the Son of man, and, though not absolutely irremissible to such as repent, yet in

the absence of such timely repentance it will be punished both here and hereafter. Augustine has several references to this sin, but his opinion of the matter may be briefly summed up in continued resistance to the influences of the Holy Spirit by insuperable hardness of heart, and in perseverance in obduracy and impenitence to the last. Thus in his Commentary on Romans he says, "That man sins against the Holy Spirit who, despairing or deriding and despising the preaching of grace by which sins are washed away, and of peace by which we are reconciled to God, refuses to repent of his sins, and resolves that he must go on hardening himself in a certain impious and fatal sweetness of them, and persists therein to the end." He further insists that neither pagans, nor Jews, nor heretics, nor schismatics, however they may have opposed the Holy Spirit before baptism, were shut out by the Church from that sacrament in case they truly repented; nor after baptism in case of falling into sin, or resisting the Spirit of God, were they debarred from restoration to pardon and peace on repentance, and that even those whom our Lord charged with this blasphemy might repent and betake themselves to the Divine mercy. "What else remains," he asks, "but that the sin against the Holy Spirit, which our Lord says is neither forgiven in this world nor in that which is to come, must be understood to be no other than perseverance in malignity and wickedness with despair of the indulgence and mercy of God? For this is to resist the grace and peace of the Spirit of which we speak."

3. *Modern expositions of this sin.* Some of these reproduce or nearly so the interpretations of the ancients. They may in the main be divided into three classes. The first class consists of those who, like Hammond, Tillotson, Wetstein, understand the sin in question to be the diabolical calumny of the Pharisees, in ascribing to the power of Satan the miracles which the Saviour by the Spirit given him without measure performed. Here was evidently the mighty power of God, but these men, maliciously, wantonly, and wickedly, as also presumptuously and blasphemously, pronounced the miracle just wrought before their eyes and in their presence to be an effect produced by the evil one. The connection instituted between the twenty-ninth and thirtieth verses of this third chapter of St. Mark by the word *καὶ*, corresponding to the parallel *διὰ τοῦτο* of St. Matthew, and the imperfect *ἔλεγον*, equivalent to "they kept saying," are both in favour of this interpretation. Under this first class are several modifications, such as that which proceeds on the supposed distinction between "Son of man" and "Son of God," as though he said that whosoever spake a word against Jesus as the Son of man, having his divinity shrouded and veiled in his humanity, might obtain forgiveness; but blasphemy against him as the Son of God, evidencing his divinity by miracles, could not obtain forgiveness. Another modification understands our Lord's warning the Pharisees that they were fast approaching an unpardonable sin by wickedly rejecting the Son of man as a Saviour; that one step further—one other blasphemy, that of the Spirit who, if not then, might hereafter reveal this, or a coming, Saviour unto them, would deprive them of the means and agent and so of the hope of salvation, and consequently of pardon. Yet another modification is that of Grotius, following in the steps of Chrysostom, to the effect that it is easier for any or all sins to obtain forgiveness than that this calumny should be pardoned; and that it will be severely punished both in the present and coming age. The second class, to which Whitby, Doddridge, and Macknight belong, holds that the Pharisees, by their conduct on this particular occasion or at the time then present, were not guilty of the sin referred to, and in fact that the sin against the Holy Ghost could not be committed while Christ still abode on earth, and before his ascension; because the Spirit was not yet given. They hold, therefore, that after our Lord's resurrection and ascension, when he would send down the Holy Ghost to attest his mission, and when his supernatural gifts and miraculous operations would furnish incontestable proofs of almighty power, any such calumny or blasphemy uttered against the Spirit then would be unpardonable. The reason was plain, because the Son of man, while he was clothed in human flesh, and his divinity shrouded from human sight, and while his work on earth was not yet finished, might be slandered by persons unwittingly, or, according to the Scripture phrase, "ignorantly in unbelief;" but once the Holy Spirit had come down, and shed the light of heaven over the events of the Saviour's life from the cradle to the cross, and had illumined with glory unspeakable the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary and Olivet, making plain to every willing mind the momentous import of all those marvellous transactions, the blasphemy of the

Spirit could not then be in ignorance or for lack of sufficient demonstration; but presumptuous against light and against knowledge, from sheer malevolence and unaccountable malignity. The Pharisees were preparing for this—they were approaching the brink of this fearful abyss, and our Lord warns them back before it was possible for them to take the fatal plunge, and involve themselves in ruin without remedy. A *third* class of interpreters generalizes the sin in question in much the same way as we have seen Augustine do, and resolves it into continued resistance and obstinate opposition to the grace of the gospel, impenitently and unbelievably persisted in till the end. This is the view which Dr. Chalmers elaborates with great eloquence and power in his sermon on "Sin against the Holy Ghost." In that sermon we read as follows:—"A man may shut against himself all the avenues of reconciliation. There is nothing mysterious in the kind of sin by which the Holy Spirit is tempted to abandon him to that state in which there can be no forgiveness and no return unto God. It is by a movement of conscience within him, that the man is made sensible of sin, that he is visited with the desire of reformation, that he is given to feel his need both of mercy to pardon, and of grace to help him; in a word, that he is drawn unto the Saviour, and brought into that intimate alliance with him by faith which brings down upon him both acceptance with the Father and all the power of a new and constraining impulse to the way of obedience. But this movement is a suggestion of the Spirit of God, and, if it be resisted by any man, the Spirit is resisted. The God who offers to draw him unto Christ is resisted. The man refuses to believe because his deeds are evil; and by every day of perseverance in these deeds, the voice which tells him of their guilt and urges him to abandon them is resisted; and thus the Spirit ceases to suggest, and the Father, from whom the Spirit proceedeth, ceases to draw, and the inward voice ceases to remonstrate—and all this because their authority has been so often put forth and so often turned away. This is the deadly offence which has reared an impassable wall against the return of the obstinately impenitent. This is the blasphemy to which no forgiveness can be granted, because, in its very nature, the man who has come this length feels no movement of conscience towards that ground on which alone forgiveness can be awarded to him, and where it is never refused even to the very worst and most malignant of human iniquities. This is the sin against the Holy Ghost. It is not peculiar to any one age. It does not lie in any one unfathomable mystery. It may be seen at this day in thousands and thousands more, who, by that most familiar and most frequently exemplified of all habits, a habit of resistance to a sense of duty, have at length stifled it altogether, and driven their inward monitor away from them, and have sunk into a profound moral lethargy, and so will never obtain forgiveness—not because forgiveness is ever refused to any who repent and believe the gospel, but because they have made their faith and their repentance impracticable. . . . The whole mysteriousness of this sin against the Holy Ghost is thus done away. Grant him the office with which he is invested in the Word of God, even the office of instigating the conscience to all its reprovals of sin, and to all its admonitions of repentance; and then, if ever you witnessed the case of a man whose conscience had fallen into a profound and irrecoverable sleep, or, at least, had lost to such a degree its power of control over him, that he stood out against every engine which was set up to bring him to the faith and repentance of the New Testament,—behold in such a man a sinner against conscience to such a woeful extent that conscience had given up its direction of him; or, in other words, a sinner against the Holy Ghost to such an extent that he had let down the office of warning him away from that ground of danger and of guilt on which he stood so immovably posted." There are some modifications of this view which it may be well to notice. One is that which makes the sin against the Holy Ghost to be resistance to conscience as the voice of God in the soul—the voice which the Holy Spirit employs in testifying to truth and goodness, and in reprobating sin and recommending the Saviour. Another modification is that which makes blasphemy against the Holy Ghost to consist in the expression of malignant unbelief of, and wilful apostasy from, the truth of God, and that, because it is the Holy Ghost which illumines the understanding and applies the truth to the heart of believers.

4. *Remarks on the foregoing theories.* In our observations on the foregoing theories we do not deem it prudent dogmatically to determine which of them is the correct one. In a case where such diversities of opinion have prevailed, even among the ablest

scholars and the most eloquent theologians, it is better that every one should be persuaded in his own mind. We may, however, be permitted to state that view which has recommended itself most to our mind, and some grounds for the preference to which we think it entitled. The view held by the first class above mentioned appears to us on the whole the most tenable, for (1) it is most in harmony with the context, as it stands both in this Gospel and that of St. Matthew. The Pharisees had witnessed an undeniable miracle in the cure of a blind and dumb demoniac; but, instead of acknowledging the finger of God in the miraculous cure, they ascribed it to complicity or collusion with the power of darkness. This was a gratuitous and malicious calumny; it was a sin of speech as well as of thought—a blasphemy, in fact, in the literal sense. The form which the sin is represented as taking is that of *speech*, as appears plainly from the contrast between speaking a word against the Son of man and speaking against the Holy Ghost. Again, (2) the allegation of the second class, that the Holy Ghost was not given till after the Ascension, though quite true in reference to the disciples, does not apply to the Master, to whom the Spirit was given without measure from the first. Further, (3) the view of the third class, so ably advocated by Dr. Chalmers and many others, and which in substance was that held by Augustine, appears too wide in extent and too general in its character; whereas the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is something peculiar and special, and of rare occurrence. Besides, if the sin in question consisted in obstinate resistance to the gospel, continued till that resistance culminated in final unbelief, it would be little, if anything, different from sin in general which, by obstinate continuance therein, becomes unpardonable, and that, not from lack of cleansing power in the blood of Christ, nor from any peculiar aggravation, but solely on account of continued persistence therein.

5. *Perilous approximations to this sin.* That many have been unduly exercised and harassed by fancied guiltiness of this sin, is certain; that some have despaired or become melancholy on this account, is credible; that many have been driven to insanity by it we can scarcely believe. To any who are troubled with anxious thoughts about the matter we may say that, according to the theories of the first and second classes, they could not have committed the same sin in *kind*—as they did not, like the Pharisees, see the miracles wrought by our Lord, nor did they witness the supernatural operations of the Spirit after his descent at Pentecost—whatever the *degree* of their sin may have been; while, with respect to the third, the sin being that of continued resistance, they have only to abandon their dogged opposition, the abandonment of which their very anxiety proves to have become already an accomplished fact. To all, of whatever class of opinion, who are apprehensive—earnestly apprehensive and afraid of having committed this sin—their very uneasiness on that score is proof of their guiltlessness of the fancied crime, for these very upbraidings of conscience prove incompatibility with commission of this sin. At the same time, there are approximations to this sin which we should most carefully guard against. A rejection of the truth of Scripture wilfully persisted in; or trifling with the operations of the Holy Spirit in the heart; or ridicule of religion and opposition to its ordinances in general; or hostility to Christianity in particular; or contempt, malevolence, and slander directed against God and the things of God, or against the Church and people of God; or mockery of sacred things; or blasphemous suggestions harboured and indulged in—each of these involves an awfulness of criminality and a fearfulness of guilt that betoken a considerable similarity or close approximation to the heinousness of the unpardonable sin. We do not affirm that any of these is actually that sin, but only such an approach to the verge of the precipice as is sufficient to startle men to a sense of danger, and drive them back before they venture a step further. Alford, who makes the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost to be a state of wilful, determined opposition to the present power of the Holy Ghost, in which state or at least approaching very near to which the act of the Pharisees proved them to be, compares, among other Scriptures, Heb. vi. 4—8 and x. 26, 27. But the purport of the last-cited Scripture is that, in case the sacrifice of Christ is rejected, there is no other sacrifice available, all others having been done away, and consequently no other means of escape from the wrath of God; while the former passage refers to apostasy so aggravated as to render restoration impossible, because the persons guilty of it fell away in spite of the clearest possible evidence to the truth of the Christian faith. Another Scripture frequently compared with that before us is 1 John v. 16. The sin

there mentioned as tending unto (*eis*) death is regarded by some to be the act of denying Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God, or the state of apostasy indicated by that act; others hold it to be apostasy from Christianity, combined with diabolical enmity, and that in the face of extraordinary evidence; but it appears to be a specific act of sin, of the commission of which the evidence is clear and convincing, distinct and precise—such an act of apostasy as blasphemes the Holy Ghost by ascribing his operations to Satanic power. This sin unto death is certainly the nearest approach to the unpardonable sin, if it be not, as many hold it to be, identical with it. Of the three different readings, *κρίσεως*, *κολάσεως*, and *ἀμαρτήματος*, the last is the best supported; while the expression “an eternal sin” signifies either a sin that is not pardoned or a sin of which the punishment is not remitted. The connection of the aphoristic expression which immediately follows in St. Matthew, *viz.* “Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit,” is briefly but correctly pointed out in the remark of Chrysostom, “Since they did not reprove the works, but calumniated him that did them, he shows that this accusation was contrary to the natural sequence of affairs.”—J. J. G.

Vers. 31—35. Parallel passages: Matt. xii. 46—50; Luke viii. 19—21.—*The real relationship.* I. NO SLIGHT INTENDED. The crowd that sat around prevented his relatives reaching him; they therefore sent a message, to which his reply cannot with any propriety be twisted into an expression of contempt. His obedience to his parents in the humble home at Nazareth during the years of youth, and his tender solicitude for his apparently widowed mother when, as he hung on the cross, he commended her to the care of the beloved disciple, preclude the possibility of such a meaning.

II. HEAVENLY KINSHIP. He looked round in a *circle*; this expression of the look, like that of the sitting posture of the multitude, implies the report of an eye-witness. Looking round about him and directly into the face of every faithful follower sitting there, he announced a higher and holier relationship than that formed by an earthly tie; he acquainted them with the existence of kinship near and dear as that which unites the nearest and dearest of human kindred. The Church is Christ's family, and to every true member of that family he is bound by the tenderest bonds of love. What a privilege to be thus closely united to and tenderly loved by Christ!

III. CONDITION OF THIS RELATIONSHIP. It is not the possession of varied knowledge of God's will and works and ways, though that is important; nor is it the possession of faith, though that is the root; nor is it the acceptance of Christ in the exercise of faith, though that is indispensable to salvation; but it is a more practical condition, and one more easily known and more readily discernible;—it is doing the will of God.

IV. THE MEASURE OF ENDEARMENT BELONGING TO THIS KINSHIP. The Saviour makes his natural affections the measure of his spiritual friendship. When we are enjoined to love our neighbour as ourselves, it does not mean that we should love ourselves less, but our neighbour more; so here, he does not love his mother and brothers and sisters less, but his true disciples more. The poorest and meanest as well as the richest may attain to this honour and share this love. We may obtain in this way a name better than that of sons and daughters; we may be honoured with that new, best name of love.

‘Behold th’ amazing gift of love
The Father hath bestow’d
On us, the sinful sons of men,
To call us sons of God.”

J. J. G.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1.—And again he began to teach by the seaside. This return to the seaside is mentioned by St. Mark only. From this

time our Lord's teaching began to be more public. The room and the little courtyard no longer sufficed for the multitudes that came to him. The Authorized Version says that “a great multitude was gathered unto

him." The Greek adjective, according to the most approved reading, is *πλείστος*, the superlative of *πολύς*, and should be rendered "a very great" multitude. They had probably been waiting for him in the neighbourhood of Capernaum. He entered into a boat—probably the boat mentioned at ch. iii. 9—and sat in the sea, i.e. in the boat afloat on the water, so as to be relieved of the pressure of the vast multitude (*πλείστος ὄχλος*) gathered on the shore.

Ver. 2.—He taught them many things in parables. This was a new system of teaching. For some months he had taught directly. But as he found that this direct teaching was met in some quarters with unbelief and scorn, he abandoned it for the less direct method of the parable. The parable (*παραβολή*) is etymologically the setting forth of one thing by the side of another, so that the one may be compared with the other. The parable is the truth presented by a similitude. It differs from the proverb inasmuch as it is necessarily figurative. The proverb may be figurative, but it need not of necessity be figurative. The parable is often an expanded proverb, and the proverb a condensed parable. There is but one Hebrew word for the two English words "parable" and "proverb," which may account for their being frequently interchanged. The proverb (Latin) is a common sentiment generally accepted. The parable (Greek) is something put by the side of something else. Theologically, it is something in the world of nature which finds its counterpart in the world of spirit. The parable attracts attention, and so becomes valuable as a test of character. It reveals the seekers after truth, those who love the light. It withdraws the light from those who love darkness. And said unto them in his doctrine (*ἐν τῇ διδασκίᾳ αὐτοῦ*); literally, *in his teaching*, namely, that particular mode of teaching which he had just introduced; "he taught them" (*ἐδίδασκεν*). He said, "in his teaching" (*ἐν τῇ διδασκίᾳ αὐτοῦ*).

Vers. 3—8.—Hearken (*Ἀκούετε*). This word is introduced in St. Mark's narrative only; and it is very suitable to the warning at ver. 9, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. The sower went forth to sow. The scope of this beautiful parable is this: Christ teaches us that he is the Sower, that is, the great Preacher of the gospel among men. 1. But not all who hear the gospel believe it and receive it; just as some of the seed sown fell by the wayside, on the hard footpath, where it could not penetrate the ground, but lay upon the surface, and so was picked up by the birds. 2. Again, not all who hear and believe persevere in the faith; some fall away; like the seed sown on rocky ground, which springs up indeed,

but for want of depth of soil puts forth no root, and is soon scorched by the rising sun, and, being without root, withers away. 3. But further, not all who show faith bring forth the fruit of good works; like the seed sown among the thorns, which, growing up together with it, choked it (*συνέπνιξαν αὐτὸν*); such is the meaning. St. Luke has the words (*συνφυεῖσαι αἱ ἄκανθαι ἀπέπνιξαν*), "the thorns grew up with it and choked it." 4. But, lastly, there are those who receive the gospel in the love of it, and bring forth fruit, not, however, in equal measure, but some thirtyfold, some sixty, some a hundred; and this on account of the greater influences of grace, or on account of the more ready co-operation of the free-will of man with the sovereign grace of God. The whole parable marks a gradation. In the first case the seed produces nothing; in the second it produces only the blade; in the third it is near the point of producing fruit, but fails to bring forth to perfection; in the fourth it yields fruit, but in different measures.

Ver. 9.—And he said, Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. St. Luke (viii. 8) has a stronger word than (*ἐλεγεν*) "he said." He (viii. 8) has (*ἐφώνει*) "he cried." Our Lord uses this expression, "he that hath ears to hear," etc., when the subject-matter is figurative or obscure, as though to rouse the attention of his hearers. He has "ears to hear" who diligently attends to the words of Christ, that he may ponder and obey them. Many heard him out of curiosity, that they might hear something new, or learned, or brilliant; not that they might lay to heart the things which they heard, and endeavour to practise them in their lives. And so it is with those who go to hear sermons on account of the fame of the preacher, and not that they may learn to amend their lives; and thus the words of Jehovah to Ezekiel (xxxiii. 32) are fulfilled, "And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not."

Ver. 10.—When he was alone. These words do not appear in St. Matthew's account. He simply says that "the disciples came and said unto him." This must have been upon some other occasion. It could not have been when he was preaching from the boat; for St. Mark says, they that were about him with the twelve. He is the only evangelist who notices this. We must not forget that, besides the twelve, there were seventy other disciples. They asked of him the parables (*τὰς παραβολὰς*), according to the best reading. The inquiry was a general one, although St. Mark here gives the explanation of one only.

Vers. 11, 12.—To know the mystery. The Greek verb γινῶναι, to know, is not found in the best manuscripts, in which the words are (ὑμῖν τὸ μυστήριον δέδοται), *unto you is given the mystery of the kingdom of God*. Our Lord here explains why he spake to the mixed multitude in parables; namely, because most of them were as yet incapable of receiving the gospel: some would not believe it, others reviled it. Therefore our Lord here encourages his own disciples to search out his words spoken in parables, and humbly to inquire into their full meaning, that so they might become able ministers and efficient preachers of the gospel. Moreover, by this he shows that this efficiency cannot be obtained by our own strength, but must be humbly sought for from God. For it is his own gift which he bestows on the disciples of Christ, and denies to others, whom he leaves to the blindness of their own hearts. It is as though he said, "To you, my disciples, my apostles, it is given, since you believe in me as the Messiah, to have continually more clear revelations from me of the mysteries of God and of heaven, by which you shall day by day increase in the knowledge and love of him. But from the scribes and others, because they will not believe in me as their own Messiah, God will take away even that small knowledge which they have of him and of his kingdom. Yea, he will deprive them of all the special privileges which they have hitherto possessed." But the words are not limited in their application to those who were living on the earth when Christ sojourned here. He says to all in every age who come within the reach of his gospel, "Those who come to me with a sincere heart and a simple desire to know the truth, as you, my apostles, are doing, to them I will reveal the mysteries of my kingdom, and I will help them onwards in the path of holiness, by which they may at length attain to the heavenly kingdom. But they who have not this pure desire of truth, but indulge their own lusts and errors, from them that little knowledge of God and of Divine things will by degrees be taken away, and they will become altogether blind." Observe the expression (ἐκείνοις δὲ τοῖς ἔξω), but unto them that are without. There were then, just as there are now, those who were outside the realm of spiritual things; not caring for, not understanding, not desirous of spiritual truth. Lest at any time they should be converted (μήποτε ἐπιστρέψουσιν)—*lest haply they should turn again* (the verb is active)—and their sins should be forgiven them. According to the best reading, τὰ ἀμαρτήματα is omitted; so it runs, *and it should be forgiven them*. The use of the active verb brings out the sin-

ner's responsibility with respect to his own conversion.

Ver. 13.—Know ye not this parable! and how shall ye know all the parables! that is, "How, then, can you expect to understand all parables, as they ought to do who are instructed unto the kingdom of heaven?" It is St. Mark alone who recalls and records these words. They are striking and vivid, as illustrating the condition of mind of the disciples at this time—slow of apprehension, and yet desirous to learn.

Ver. 14.—The sower soweth the word. St. Matthew (xiii. 19) calls it "the word of the kingdom"—an expression equivalent to "the gospel of the kingdom," not merely moral truth, but spiritual and eternal.

Ver. 15.—Straightway cometh Satan. St. Matthew (xiii. 19) says, "then cometh (δὲ τοῦτο) the evil one;" the same expression which our Lord uses in the Lord's Prayer, and which helps to justify the English rendering in the Revised Version there. As the seed falling by the wayside is refused by the hard and well-trodden ground, and so is readily picked up by the birds; in like manner, the seed of God's Word, falling upon a heart rendered callous by the custom of sinning, is straightway snatched away by "the evil one," urging the heart again to its accustomed sins. Well may we pray to be delivered from this "evil one."

Vers. 16, 17.—And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground. This sentence would be better rendered, *And these in like manner are they that are sown upon the rocky places*, where the words "likewise," or "in like manner," mean "by a similar mode of interpretation." This is the second condition of soil on which the seed is sown—a better condition than the former; for the former plainly refused the seed, but this, having some soil favourable to the germination of the seed, receives it, and the seed springs up, though but for a little while. So the rocky ground is like the heart of that hearer who hears the Word of God, and receives it with joy. He is delighted with its beauty, its justice, its purity; and he breaks forth with holy affections. But alas! he has more of the rock than of the good soil in his heart. Hence the Word of God cannot strike a deep root into his soul. He is not constant in the faith. He endures but for a time, and in the hour of temptation he falls away.

Ver. 18.—And these are they which are sown among thorns. According to the best authorities, the words are (καὶ ἄλλοι εἰσιν), *and others are they*, etc. This marks a considerable difference between the two classes. This is the third condition of soil; and it is so much better than the former, inasmuch as the thorns present less obstacles to the

growth of the seed than the rocky ground does. This similitude indicates the heart of that hearer who is beset with the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things.

Ver. 19.—The cares of the world (*τὰς αἰώνων*); literally, *of the age*; that is, temporal and secular cares, incident to the age in which our lot is cast, and which are common to all. These, like thorns, distress and trouble, and often wound the soul; while, on the other hand, the care of the soul and the thought of heavenly things compose and establish the mind. The deceitfulness of riches. Riches are aptly compared to thorns, because, like thorns, they pierce the soul. St. Paul (1 Tim. vi. 10) speaks of some who, through the love of riches, "have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Riches are deceitful, because they often seduce the soul from God and from salvation, and are the cause of many sins. "How hardly," says our Lord, "shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of God!" They have a tendency to choke the Word of God, and to weaken the power of religion. "Those are the only true riches," says St. Gregory, "which make us rich in virtue."

Ver. 20.—Those are they that were sown upon the good ground. The good ground represents the heart which receives the Word of God with joy and desire, and true devotion of spirit, and which steadfastly retains it, whether in prosperity or in adversity; and so yields fruit, "some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundredfold." St. Jerome remarks that, as of the bad ground there were three different kinds—the wayside, the rocky, and the thorny ground; so of the good ground there is a threefold gradation indicated in the amount of its productiveness. There are differences of conditions in the hearts both of those who believe and of those who do not believe.

Ver. 21.—Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, etc.? The Greek is *ὁ λύχνος*, and is better rendered *the lamp*. The figure is recorded by St. Matthew (v. 15) as used by our Lord in his sermon on the mount. It is evident that he repeated his sayings, and used them sometimes in a different connection. The lamp is here the light of Divine truth, shining in the person of Christ. *Is the lamp brought to be put under the bushel?* It comes to us. The light in our souls is not of our own kindling; it comes to us from God, that we may manifest it for his glory. "The bushel" (*μόδιος*), from the Latin *modius*, a measure containing flour, was the flour-bin, a part of the furniture of every house, as was the tall lampstand with its single light. St. Luke (viii. 16) calls it "a vessel" (*καλύπτει αὐτὸν*

σκεῦος). The light is to be set on "a lampstand," and in like manner the light which we have received is to shine before men. As Christians, we are Christ's light-bearers. By this illustration our Lord teaches that he was unwilling that the mysteries of this great parable of the sower and of other parables should be concealed, but that his disciples should unfold these things to others as he had to them, although at present they might not be able to receive them.

Ver. 22.—For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested. The Greek of the latter part of this sentence, according to the best authorities, runs thus: *ἐὰν ᾧ ἴνα φανερωθῇ*; so the true rendering of the words is, *there is nothing hid save that it should be manifested*; that is, there is nothing now hid, but in order that it may be made known. There is a great principle of the Divine operations here announced by our Lord. Much, very much, is now hidden from us, in nature, in providence, and in grace. But it will not always be hidden. In natural things more and more is revealed as science advances, and in providence and in grace the mysteries of the kingdom will one day, and at the fitting time, be laid open to all. "What I tell you in the darkness, speak ye in the light" (Matt. x. 27).

Ver. 23.—Take heed what ye hear. Attend, that is, to these words which ye hear from me, that ye may understand them, and commit them to memory, and so be able to communicate them effectually to others. Let none of my words escape you. Our Lord bids us to pay the greatest attention to his words, and so to digest them that we may be able to teach them to others. With what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you: and more shall be given unto you. Our Lord's meaning is clearly this: If you freely and plentifully communicate and preach my doctrine to others, you shall receive a corresponding reward. Nay, you shall have a return in far more abundant measure. For thus the fountains, the more water they pour out below, so much the more do they receive from above. Here, then, is great encouragement to all faithful teachers of the Word, of whatever kind; that by how much they give to others in teaching them, by so much the more shall they receive of wisdom and grace from Christ; according to those words of the apostle, "He that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Cor. ix. 6).

Ver. 25.—For he that hath, to him shall be given. He that uses his gifts, whether of intellect or of goodness, bestowed upon him by God, to him shall be granted an increase of those gifts. But from him who

uses them not, God will gradually take them away. Christ here encourages his apostles and disciples to diligent and earnest preaching of his gospel, by promising them in return yet greater influxes of his wisdom and grace.

Vers. 26—28.—This parable is recorded by St. Mark alone. It differs greatly from the parable of the sower, although both of them are founded upon the imagery of the seed cast into the ground. In both cases the seed represents the doctrine of the gospel; the field represents the hearers; the harvest the end of the world, or perhaps the death of each individual hearer. So is the kingdom of God, in its progress from its establishment to its completion. The sower casts seed upon the earth, not without careful preparation of the soil, but without further sowing. And then he pursues his ordinary business. He sleeps by night; he rises by day; he has leisure for other employment; his work as a sower is finished. Meanwhile the seed germinates and grows by its own hidden virtues, assisted by the earth, the sun, and the air, the sower knowing nothing of the mysterious process. First comes the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Such is the preaching of the gospel. Here, therefore, the sower represents human responsibility in the work. The vitality of the seed is independent of his labour. The earth develops the plant from the seed by those natural but mysterious processes through which the Creator is ever working. So in spiritual things, the sower commences the work, and the grace of God perfects it in the heart which receives these influences. The earth beareth fruit of herself. In like manner, by degrees, the faith of Christ increases through the preaching of the gospel; and the Church grows and expands. And what is true of the Church collectively is true also of each individual member of the Church. For the heart of each faithful Christian produces first the blade, when it conceives good desires and begins to put them into action; then the ear, when it brings them to good effect; and lastly the full corn in the ear, when it brings them to their full maturity and perfection. Hence our Lord in this parable intimates that they who labour for the conversion of souls ought, with much patience, to wait for the fruit of their labour, as the husbandman waits with much patience for the precious fruits of the earth.

Vers. 29.—But when the fruit is ripe (*ὅταν δὲ παραδῇ ὁ καρπὸς*). The verb here is active; it might be rendered *delivereth up*, or *alloweth*. It is a peculiar expression, though evidently meaning "when the fruit is ready." He putteth forth the sickle,

because the harvest is come. As soon as Christ's work is completed, whether in the Church or in the individual, "immediately" the sickle is sent forth. As soon as a Christian is ready for heaven, God calls him away; and therefore we may infer that it is unwise, if not sinful, for a Christian, oppressed it may be with sickness or trouble, to be eager in wishing to leave this world. "It is one thing to be willing to go when God pleases; it is another thing to speak as though we wished to hasten our departure." "When the fruit is ripe, immediately he putteth forth the sickle." It, therefore, the sickle is not yet sent forth, it is because the fruit is not yet fully ripe. The afflictions of the faithful are God's means to ripen them for heaven. They are the dressing which the Lord of the vineyard employs to make the tree more fruitful, to make the Christian more fruitful in grace, and more ripe for glory.

Vers. 30—32.—Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? In the first clause of this verse the best authorities give *πῶς* for *τίνι*, *How shall we liken the kingdom of God?* and in the second clause, instead of the Greek of which the Authorized Version is the rendering, the best-approved reading is (*τίνι αὐτὴν παραβολῇ θάμεν*), *in what parable shall we set it forth?* Our Lord thus stimulates the intellect of his hearers, by making them his associates, as it were, in the search for appropriate similitudes (see Dr. Morison, *in loc.*). The kingdom of God, that is, his Church on earth, is like a grain of mustard seed. By this image our Lord shows the great power, fertility, and extension of the Church; inasmuch as it started from a very small and apparently insignificant beginning, and spread itself over the whole world. It is not literally and absolutely true that the grain of mustard seed is less than all seeds. There are other seeds which are less than it. But the expression may readily be allowed when we compare the smallness of the seed with the greatness of the results produced by it. It is one of the least of all seeds. And so the preaching of the Gospel and the establishment of the Church was one of the smallest of beginnings. Perhaps the well-known pungency of the seed of the mustard plant may suggest the quickening, stimulating power of the Gospel when it takes root in the heart. The mustard plant shoots out large branches, which are used as fuel in some countries, quite large enough for shadow for the birds. A traveller in South America says that it grows to so large a tree upon the slopes of the mountains of Chili that he could ride under its branches.

Vers. 33, 34.—With many such parables; such, that is, as he had just been delivering—plain and simple illustrations which all might understand; not abstruse and difficult similitudes, but sufficiently plain for them to perceive that there was heavenly and Divine truth lying hidden beneath them, so that they might be drawn onwards through that which they did understand, to search into something hidden beneath it, which at present they did not know. But privately to his own disciples he expounded (*ἐπέλυε*) all things. This word (*ἐπιλύω*) occurs nowhere else in the Gospels. But it does occur in St. Peter's second Epistle (i. 20), "No Scripture is of any private (*ἐπιλλόμενος*) exposition, or interpretation." This suggests a connection between St. Mark's Gospel and that Epistle, and may be accepted as an auxiliary evidence, however small, as to the genuineness of the Epistle.

Vers. 35, 36.—And on that day,—the day, that is, on which the parables were delivered, at least those recorded by St. Mark—when even was come, he saith unto them, Let us go over unto the other side. And leaving the multitude, they take him with them, even as he was, in the boat. It was the boat from which he had been preaching. They made no special preparation. They did not land first to obtain provisions. It would have been inconvenient to go ashore in the midst of the crowd. They made at once, as he told them to do, for the other side. And other boats were with him. This is another interesting circumstance. Probably those who were in these boats had availed themselves of them to get nearer to the great Prophet, the boatmen themselves having seen the vast crowd that was gathered on the shore, and so having been attracted thither. Thus he had a large audience on the sea as well as on the land. And now it was so ordered that he was surrounded by a fleet and by a multitude of witnesses when he stilled the tempest.

Ver. 37.—And there arose a great storm of wind; literally, *there ariseth* (*γίνεται λαλῶν*). St. Mark often uses the historical present, which gives vigour and point to his narrative. And the waves beat into the boat, inasmuch that the boat was now filling (*ἤδη γεμίζεσθαι*). St. Matthew says (viii. 24), "the boat was covered with the waves." St. Luke (viii. 23), "they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy." Bede and others have thought that the boat in which Christ was was the only boat that was tossed by this storm; in order that Christ might show his power in limiting the area of the tempest. But it is far more probable that the other boats were subject to it; for they were very near to the boat in which Christ was. There must have been some

reason for the allusion to these boats; and the wider the reach of the tempest, the greater would appear the Divine power of Christ in stilling it, and the greater the amount of testimony to the reality of the miracle. The miracle was wrought to show his power over all creation, the sea as well as the dry land; and that they, his disciples, and all who were with him might believe in him as the Omnipotent God. But further, this tempest on the sea of Galilee was a type and symbol of the trials and temptations which should come on the Church. For the Church of God is as a ship in a storm, ever tossed upon "the waves of this troublesome world." And then, moreover, as the rude storm urges the ship onwards, so that it more quickly reaches the desired haven, so afflictions and temptations quicken Christ's disciples to the greater desire of holiness, by which they are borne onwards more speedily to "the haven where they would be."

Ver. 38.—And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow; more literally, *he himself was in the stern* (*ἦν αὐτὸς ἐν τῇ πρύμνῃ*) *asleep on the cushion* (*ἐν τῷ προσκεφάλαιον καθέδων*). He had changed his posture. He was weary with the labour of addressing the great multitude. He had sought the momentary rest which the crossing of the lake offered to him. He was resting his head upon the low bench which served both for a seat and for a pillow. But while he slept as man, he was watchful as God. "Behold, he that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps." Master, carest thou not that we perish? This question savours of impatience, if not of irreverence. Who so likely to have put it as St. Peter? Nor would he be likely afterwards to forget that he had put it. Hence, probably, its appearance in St. Mark's Gospel.

Ver. 39.—And he arose—literally, *he awakes* (*διεγέρθη*)—and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still (*Σιώπα, σέφιμωσο*); literally, *Be silent! be muzzled!* The Greek perfect implies that before the word was uttered, the thing was done by the simple fiat of his will preceding the word. The combined descriptions of the synoptists show that the storm was very violent, such as no human power could have composed or stilled. So that these words indicate the supreme authority of Christ as God, ruling the sea with his mighty power. Thus Christ shows himself to be God. In like manner, Christ is able to overrule and control the persecutions of the Church and the temptations of the soul. St. Augustine says that "when we allow temptations to overcome us, Christ sleeps in us. We forget Christ at such times. Let us, then, remember him. Let us awake him

He will speak. He will rebuke the tempest in the soul, and there will be a great calm." There was a great calm. For all creation perceives its Creator. He never speaks in vain. It is observable that, as in his miracles of healing, the subjects of them usually passed at once to perfect soundness, so here, there was no gradual subsiding of the storm, as in the ordinary operations of nature, but almost before the word had escaped his lips there was a perfect calm.

Ver. 40.—And he said unto them, Why are ye fearful? have ye not yet faith? *Not τὸς οὐκ ἔχετε, but οὐρα ἔχετε.* If they had faith, they would have known that, though asleep, he could preserve them.

Ver. 41.—And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him? This would seem to have been said by the sailors, though it was doubtless assented to by all.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—20.—*Spiritual sowing.* It is a picturesque and memorable sight. Multitudes of people, of all classes and from every part of the land, have assembled on the western shore of the Galilean lake, where Jesus is daily occupied in teaching and in healing. To protect himself from the pressure of the crowd, and the better to command his audience, Jesus steps into a boat, and pushes off a few yards from the beach. There, with the fair landscape before him, corn-fields covering the slopes, the birds of the air above, winging their flight over the still waters,—the great Teacher addresses the people. His language is figurative, drawn from the processes of nature and the employments of husbandry, probably at the very moment apparent to his eye. How natural that, at this moment and in this scene, our Lord should introduce a new style of teaching, should enter upon a new phase of ministry! The parable, as a vehicle for spiritual truth, had indeed been employed by Jewish teachers and prophets; but it was our Lord himself who carried this style of spiritual instruction to perfection.

I. THE SOWER. Every man, and especially every teacher, is a sower—intellectual, moral, or both. Christ is emphatically *the Sower*. He was such in his ministry on earth; in his death, when the corn of wheat fell into the ground and died, he was both the Sower and the Seed; in the gospel dispensation he continues to be the Divine Sower. His apostles and all his ministers have been sowing through the long centuries, or rather he has been sowing by their hands. How wise, liberal, diligent, unwearied, is Christ in this beneficent work!

II. THE SEED. This is the Word of God. All truth is spiritual seed; the truth relating to God—his will and grace—is "the seed of the kingdom." Like the seed, the gospel is comparatively small and insignificant; it has within it inherent vitality, a living germ; it is seemingly thrown away and hidden; its nature is to grow and to increase and multiply; it is tender and depends upon the treatment it meets with whether it lives or dies.

III. THE SOIL. The human heart is adapted to receive and to cherish the spiritual seed. But as on the surface of the earth some ground is fertile and some is barren, some ground is adapted to one crop and other ground to a crop of different kind, so it is in the spiritual husbandry. Whilst all hearts are created to receive the heavenly seed, and only fulfil their end when they bear spiritual fruit, we cannot but recognize the marvellous diversity of soil into which the gospel is deposited. Yet we must not so interpret the parable as to countenance the doctrine of fatalism.

IV. THE SOWING. Was the sower in the parable guided, in the manner and measure of his sowing, by the likelihood or otherwise that the land would prove fruitful? No; neither should the gospel sower reckon probabilities: his Master did not. The sower should be liberal and indiscriminate, should "sow beside all waters," should remember that he "knows not which shall prosper, this or that." It is for him to do his work diligently and faithfully, and leave results to God; e.g. the mother and the child, the teacher and the class, the master and the pupil or apprentice, the preacher and the congregation, the author and the reader.

V. THE GROWTH. This is not universal; for, as the parable reminds us, it comes to pass, both in the natural and the spiritual sowing, that in some cases the seed disappears and comes to nought. Yet the redemption of Christ proclaimed, and the grace of the

Holy Spirit vouchsafed, co-operate oftentimes to most blessed results, even as in nature seed and soil, showers and sunshine, produce a vigorous growth.

VI. **THE HARVEST.** What is the end of sowing and tilling, of culture and toil? It is fruit. And, in the spiritual kingdom, what is the aim and recompense of the Divine and of all human sowers? It is fruit—of holiness, obedience, love, joy, peace, eternal life. It shall not be wanting. "My word shall not return unto me void;" "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy;" "They shall bring their sheaves with them;" it may be "after many days." There is a harvest in time, and a richer, riper harvest in eternity.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. One of encouragement for all gospel sowers; they are doing the Master's work, they are following the Master's example, they are assured of the Master's support. 2. One of admonition to all to whom the Word is preached. Take heed what and how you hear. The seed is heavenly; is the soil kindly, prepared, grateful, fruitful?

Vers. 4, 15.—The Word stolen from the heart. Young preachers, in the strength of their convictions and the ardour of their benevolence, are often inspired with enthusiastic expectations concerning the results of the preaching of the gospel. It seems to them that the Word has only to be addressed to men's minds in order to meet with an eager, grateful, and immediate acceptance. As their experience enlarges, and as they learn in how many cases reason and conscience are silenced by the clamour of passion and interest, or disregarded through the power of sinful habit or the influence of sinful society, they turn to this parable, and learn how just was the view and how tempered the expectations of the Divine Teacher and Saviour, as to the acceptance with which his gospel should meet.

I. **THE HEART HARDENED BY WORLDLINESS AND SIN IS NOT RECEPTIVE OF THE WORD.** 1. *Worldly thoughts and cares* preoccupy the mind, so that there is no response to the appeals of the gospel. When the attention is absorbed by things seen and temporal, spiritual realities appear imaginary and uninteresting. As there was no room for the babe Jesus at the inn, so the nature which welcomes every passing guest finds no place for the King and for his Word. 2. *Sin* shuts out the truth. There is no fellowship between light and darkness. The sinner's heart is closed against the heavenly rays. What preacher could not, from his own observation, offer many a living illustration of the saying, "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil"? To revert to the figure of the text, sin loved and unrepented of treads down the heart into a hard, impenetrable pathway, where no glebe breaks up, in frost, in shower, or in sunshine, to give a welcome, a home, a cradle, to the germ of spiritual life. 3. *Familiarity with truth* unheeded hardens any nature against the gospel. Who are the least hopeful in our congregations? Surely they are those who have, from habit or through influence, been attending the "means of grace" for many years, to whom every statement, every appeal, every remonstrance, every warning, is an old familiar sound, "a twice-told tale." The nature becomes not only indifferent, but callous; there is no real heed, no living susceptibility, no response of faith and joy.

II. **THE ENEMY OF SOULS SNATCHES THE WORD FROM THE HARDENED HEART.** The condition of the sinner's soul is such as offers to Satan an occasion for frustrating the benevolent designs of the Divine Sower. Had the seed fallen into good ground and been covered over, there would have been no invitation or opportunity for the birds to snatch it away. So it is only the worldly, sensual, or unbelieving nature that, so to speak, tempts the tempter himself. By the birds it is usually understood that the great Teacher intends to represent evil thoughts and imaginations and desires, such as possess the unspiritual and unthinking. How true to the life is this account! How many careless and unbelieving hearers of the gospel no sooner leave the church in which they have listened to the Word, than common, foolish, selfish, sinful thoughts take possession of their mind, and the Word is snatched away—is as though it had not been! The necessary result is that there is no fruit. How can there be fruit when the Word has not been mixed with faith in the hearer's heart? "Do you take care that it falls not on, but in, your souls." "Break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord."

Vers. 5, 6, 16, 17.—The Word starved in the heart. The Christian preacher has

sometimes reason to exclaim, "Who hath believed our report?" But sometimes he has occasion to lament over those who apparently have believed but whose goodness proves, as time passes, "as the morning cloud and as the early dew, which goeth away." Our Lord warns us that we shall meet with such cases, which first excite hope and expectation, and then cloud the soul of the Christian labourer with disappointment and sorrow. Such are compared to the rocky soil, with just a scattering of earth upon the surface, where the seed may grow, but where it will never live to produce a crop.

I. GROWTH EXCITES HOPE. In the cases symbolized by this part of the parable there is much to please and encourage the inexperienced sower of the Divine Word. We observe: 1. *Sensibility and susceptibility.* How different from the wayside hearer is this! Here we behold the truth obtaining at once a lodgment and welcome in the heart. An impressive nature is affected by the glad tidings which Christ brings from heaven. The conscience is aroused, the judgment is convinced, the heart is captivated. The first contact of the truth with the soul is of the most hopeful character. 2. *Gladness* follows the reception of the Word; for this is an emotional nature, responsive to the joyful tidings. This is indeed what ought to be expected; yet its occurrence is so rare as to occasion surprise and enkindle the most glowing expectations. It is especially in times of "revival" that such instances abound. A general excitement heightens the emotion of joy which springs up in the heart of the impressive hearer: it is joy as of one who finds a great treasure. 3. *Precocity* of growth is the natural consequence. The soil is of a "forcing" character, and yields speedy and surprising, if temporary, results. Very different from the slow, steady, gradual growth, which is most, on the whole, to be desired, is the rapid development of the religious life in the superficial convert of the apparent "revival." Extreme views, extravagant expectations, thoughtless but ardent resolves,—all testify to the quick, unhealthy growth.

II. WITHERING BRINGS DISAPPOINTMENT. 1. After a while a *season of trial* comes. Time tries all, and affliction and persecution arise. This is the providential appointment; it is discipline which Divine wisdom deems necessary. In the early days of Christianity this was a common test, and in some form and in some measure it continues and will long continue to be so. 2. Before the scorching sun the feeble growth is *withered and destroyed*. The furnace which refines the gold consumes the straw. The effect at first produced was owing to novelty, excitement, company, enthusiasm. Only the surface was reached, below was nothing. The transitory joy is followed by depression, carelessness, stolidity, obduracy. Perhaps there is a hope of the renewal of excitement, which never comes. It is seen that belief is not faith, feeling is not principle, joy is not life. To endure that test there is needed an inward, hidden life, hidden with Christ in God. There is needed a soil watered continually by heavenly dews and showers. "Blessed is he that endureth!"

APPLICATION. 1. Let sanguine preachers and teachers take a sober and scriptural view of their work, and guard against being misled by enthusiasm and extravagant expectations. 2. Let hearers of the gospel seek grace that the truth may not only touch but may penetrate their heart; let them seek the Holy Spirit's aid that they may hear the Word of God, and *keep it*!

Vers. 7, 18, 19.—*The Word choked in the heart.* Thorns make a good hedge but a bad crop. The soil here described was in itself rich, good soil. But it could not grow both thorns and wheat, and, when occupied by the one, failed to yield the other.

I. WHAT ARE THE THORNS THAT OVERGROW THE SOIL? Thorns, thistles, brambles, briars, are signs of neglect. They are the emblems of the primeval curse, for the garden was by our first parents exchanged for the thorny wilderness. In our parable the thorns are explained to represent: 1. "*The cares of this world.*" Cares, whether of State or business, of letters or science, of family or calling, may occupy the mind which has received the truth of God, to such an extent as to hinder that truth from growing up.

"Care, when it once hath entered in the breast,
Will have the whole possession ere it rest."

(Cares are distractions, and, even when concerning lawful things, if unchecked, are detri-

mental and disastrous. This is the special temptation of the poor and hardworking. Well are we directed to be "careful for nothing," etc., and "to take no thought for the morrow," etc. 2. "*The deceitfulness of riches*" is depicted under the figure of the thorns. The possession of wealth may be a curse to the rich, and the search—the race—after riches may be a curse to the avaricious and worldly. The unwary are deceived; for riches promise what they cannot give, and they sometimes draw away the heart from the treasure in heaven, which alone can truly enrich and satisfy for ever. How many, trusting in riches, have failed of the kingdom! 3. "*The lusts of other things*" have much of mischief laid to their charge. Pleasure is a fair and fragrant flower, but it may hide a thorn. It may be manifestly sinful, it may be doubtful, it may be innocent but unduly absorbing,—and in any such case it may choke the Word. How many are the things which men put in the place of religion! They are left unnamed, that we may supply them from our own knowledge of our own hearts and their manifold and varied snares. To desire aught earthly overmuch is to desire things heavenly too little.

II. HOW DO THESE THORNS CHOKE THE SEED? In two ways: 1. By *taking up the room* which the Word requires. They occupy the short and fleeting period of time allotted for our probation. The leisure for pondering and practically obeying the truth never comes. Time flies: the soul dies. They absorb attention and engage the heart. The words of the world must be listened to, and Christ must wait until "a more convenient season"—which never comes. But if the world must have our ears, must claim our hands, Christ should have our heart. Alas! men plan and toil, prosper and grow rich, respected, powerful, famous; and in doing so neglect the Word. Little know they of the mind of Paul, "To me to live is Christ." 2. By *counteracting the influence of the truth*. In the former case (the rocky ground) it was persecution; in this case it is the allurements of the world which prove injurious to the soul. Cares and lusts are thorns which must be choked or they choke. So thorn and corn grow side by side with a fair show. But gradually the evil gains the victory, and goodness perishes. What experienced sower has not seen and mourned over the process? Warnings are in vain. The thorns grow apace; the soul becomes insensible to all the claims of Christ, to all the appeals of the gospel. So the Word is unfruitful as before.

"Stones mar the root;
Thorns spoil the fruit."

What poor produce there is comes to no maturity, no perfection. Labour is wasted, promise is blasted, hope is clouded, all is lost!

APPLICATION. None who receive the Word of life are free from the danger here described. Search and find out the hindrances to vigour and fruitfulness in the spiritual life. Root them all up, that the Word may live and grow and yield abundance. Look for fruit; God looks for it as the only proof of life. Else, when the Lord comes and finds no fruit, the thorns will indeed be burned, but the ground will be exposed as fruitless and worthless, and "nigh unto cursing."

Vers. 8, 20.—*The Word fruitful in the heart*. Most varied results attend the preaching of the gospel. Look at our Lord's own ministry. On the one hand, we are told, "He did there no mighty works because of their unbelief;" "yet they believed not upon him;" and we find him exclaiming, "Wee unto you, cities!" etc. On the other hand, "the multitude heard him gladly;" of the Samaritans, "many more believed because of his word," and sometimes, in their eagerness, "they pressed upon him to hear," etc. Nor was this fact peculiar to Christ's ministry; the apostles confessed that they were to some a savour of life, to others of death; and the historian records, as a matter of fact, that "some believed, and some believed not." So is it with Christian preachers in every age; there are instances which rejoice and recompense them, and others which disappoint and depress them. The great Teacher foretells in this part of the parable that there shall ever be cases in which the Lord's Word "shall not return unto him void."

I. THE PREPARED SOIL. The good ground was in contrast with the several varieties of poor and bad soil. It was soft and yielding, as distinguished from the trodden earth of the wayside. It was deep, as distinguished from the shallow sprinkling of earth upon the rock beneath. It was clean, as distinguished from the foul, weedy, thorny land.

So with the honest and good heart, prepared by Divine influences and responsive to Divine culture and care. There is in this figurative language no countenance given to fatalism. We meet with good ground sometimes amongst those brought up in the Christian family and Church, as in Timothy; sometimes amongst those not specially privileged, but candid and guileless, as in Nathanael; sometimes even among the outwardly wicked, who yet may not be hardened, but may be ready to welcome deliverance from their evil ways, as in some of the publicans and sinners. Similar instances are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

II. THE VITAL PROCESS. In the other cases, the seed sooner or later perishes; in this case it lives. It is neither stolen, nor starved, nor choked. The reason is that the soil accepts and retains the seed. So with the heart that not only receives but holds fast the Word of life, that cherishes and matures it, that gives it a resting-place, and welcomes all heavenly influences which can quicken and strengthen and prosper it. That nature will develop into Divine life and immortal fruitfulness which ponders the truth of God, assimilates it, keeps for it the place of honour, pre-eminence, and power, gives it room and scope and play, watches over it and prays for its vitality, energy, and increase. In such a nature the seed germinates and lives and grows, for it finds there congenial soil and cordial welcome and sustenance. The power of this life is that of the Holy Spirit. "God giveth the increase."

III. THE FRUITFUL HARVEST. What is meant by "fruit"? Spiritual result for spiritual toil and agency and culture. In the case of the sinner, the first and most welcome fruit is that of conversion unto God. But the rich fruits expected are these: obedience, righteousness, holiness, Christlikeness, consecration, self-denial, usefulness. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," etc. Such fruit is the only proof of life and growth. "By their fruits ye shall know them;" i.e. by the quality, the flavour, and fragrance of the moral produce. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit;" i.e. by abundance alone can the husbandman be satisfied and recompensed. The multiplication of the seed is one of the many points of resemblance between the physical and the spiritual life. Who has not seen a heart changed by one sermon, a life made anew by one utterance or by one lesson of Divine providence? Seemingly an insignificant seed, yet a crop of glorious ripeness and luxuriance. And as for variety, every congregation of Christians is a living witness to this. Either because the same opportunities have been, in some cases, more diligently used, or because different advantages have been employed with equal assiduity; it results that some yield fruit thirty, some sixty, and others a hundredfold.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. The responsibility of hearing the Word. God provides the seed; but the preparation of the soil is largely in our hands. 2. The expectation of the Sower is great in proportion to the greatness of our advantages. Nothing less than much fruit can satisfy him from you.

Vers. 10—13, 21—25.—*The lamp of parabolic teaching.* Probably the opposition, malignity, and misrepresentation of the scribes and Pharisees were the occasion of the commencement by our Lord of a new style of public teaching. He did not wish at present to excite so much turmoil and violence as should lead to the interruption of his ministry. His design was to introduce into men's minds new ideas of the spiritual reign of God—ideas altogether in contradiction to their own carnal notions and hopes. He knew, however, the importance of considering the character and the mental position of the learner, in order that the mature might be thoroughly enlightened and instructed, in order that the immature might be encouraged to inquiry and to thought, in order that, for a season, the doctrine might remain concealed from the unspiritual and the unsympathetic.

I. THE LAMP OF DIVINE TEACHING IS INTENDED TO GIVE LIGHT. The Galilean cottage had its lampstand, its bed, its corn-measure; and every peasant could see the absurdity of first kindling the lamp and then hiding it under the meal-box or the couch. Let it be put upon the lofty stand, and it will give light to all. So when Christ came, the great Teacher, the great Saviour, he came a light into the world, to be the light of men. His words, his character, his deeds, his whole life, were an illumination from heaven. When he taught he taught for all humanity and for all time.

II. THE PARABOLIC FORM OF TEACHING WAS NO EXCEPTION. The parable hid the

truth, made a secret of it, enclosed it like a jewel in a casket. But it was never intended that the truth should remain concealed; the intention was that it should be manifested, that it should come to light (ver. 22). And, as a matter of fact, the figurative and pictorial form has served to display and illumine rather than to hide the great truths of Christianity. To how many simple, childlike minds have the parables of our Lord Jesus brought home lessons of wisdom, grace, hope, and consolation! And what materials for reflection, what profound spiritual help and illumination, have they afforded to the thoughtful student of the Word! And what themes for the teacher, the preacher, the expositor, have these parables ever been found! They are "a mystery;" but a mystery is a truth once hidden but now made clear and published abroad.

III. IN FACT, PARABOLIC TEACHING IS DARKNESS TO THE UNSPIRITUAL AND LIGHT TO THE SPIRITUAL. Like all good things, it may be used and it may be abused. When Christ speaks, there are those who do not perceive, who do not understand. Is this the fault of the Word? No, it is the fault of their own inattentive, unreceptive, unsympathizing nature. It is they, the hearers, who are to blame; not the truth which they will not appreciate (ver. 12). Yet are there those "who have ears to hear;" and these hear. To them the Word is as music, satisfying their souls, bringing to them the thoughts of the Divine mind, the love of the Divine heart, the secret of the Divine purposes. To them it is said, "Happy are your ears, for they hear!"

IV. CHRISTIANS LEARN THE MYSTERY THAT THEY MAY PUBLISH IT. Speaking especially to his apostles, but through them to all who receive the gospel, our Lord bids those who welcome and value the truth to proclaim it far and wide. It is light intended for the world's illumination; let it be set up on high, that all in this great dark house of humanity may see their way to God. It is meal for the hungering multitude; let it be dealt forth to every applicant with no sparing hand, no grudging heart. There is light enough for all who are in darkness; bread enough for all who are in danger of starving. It is the office of the members of Christ's Church to hold forth the light of life, to take of the food and, as it multiplies in their hands, to give to the vast multitude in the barren wilderness.

V. WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE BOTH FOR THE WAY IN WHICH WE RECEIVE AND FOR THE WAY IN WHICH WE IMPART DIVINE TRUTH. 1. "Take heed what and how ye hear." It is unprofitable and wrong to offer a willing ear to every teacher, to all tidings. On the other hand, it is folly and sin to turn away from him who speaketh from heaven, or to listen to him with inattention, with unconcern, with unsympathizing, unbelieving hearts. 2. "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you." Be faithful, be diligent, fulfil your trust with zeal and wisdom, display benevolence towards the untaught and the unbled, and you shall receive more—more of truth and more of spiritual enrichment and joy. On the other hand, the selfish, the un pitying, the unfaithful, shall gain nothing by spiritual niggardliness; from them shall be taken away even that which they have.

Vers. 26—29.—*Spiritual growth.* There are common truths and a common interpretation underlying this and several other parables. In all this group the seed is the Word of God, the soil is the heart of man, the life is the spiritual history and development, the fruit is Christian character, and the harvest is eternal result and retribution. But the peculiar lesson of this parable is the nature of spiritual growth. In this case it is presumed that the seed is sown in good soil.

1. IT IS HIDDEN, AND CANNOT BE TRACED AND WATCHED. Until it is deposited in the ground, seed may be beheld and examined by the eye. But then it is covered up and concealed, and germinates and begins to grow beneath the surface. In like manner you may see the truth as written, you may hear it as spoken; but when once it gets into the heart, germinates, and goes to its work, the preacher and teacher fail to follow it, and altogether lose sight of it. In the silent soul the Divine seed works in secret, lives, strives, moves, grows. Probably those reared in Christian homes cannot recollect when the truth, quickened by the Spirit, first began to live in them. Certainly you can only very dimly follow the process of growth in others. Years pass; the youth grows into the man, goes about daily duty, takes nightly rest, and all the while the hidden seed is living and developing slowly or swiftly, but unperceived even by those who planted it. How little, in some instances, preachers and teachers and parents can follow the Word, as it

does its work within the hearts of those for whom they care! Yet "the kingdom of God comes without observation." Convictions of their own spiritual nature and immortal destiny, of the character and government of God, of the love and reign of Christ, are all forming within, becoming part of the spiritual being. And the vital growth, though unperceived, is giving signs of its reality.

II. IT IS MYSTERIOUS AND NOT TO BE UNDERSTOOD. The husbandman, the gardener, "knoweth not how." Even the scientific observer cannot explain the mystery of life and growth. There is no caprice; all is reason and law, yet the process baffles our understanding. So in the working of God's kingdom within, there is much that is mysterious. How can Divine truth, naturally so unpalatable, gain a hold upon the heart? How can it overmaster other principles so that it shall flourish as they fade? And, looking to the external, how can we account for it, that the kingdom of God, so unworldly, can advance to universal victory? The power of life must be that of the Holy Spirit, acting like the sunlight and the genial warmth, the frequent showers and the morning dew. It is the Lord's doing, invisible, incomprehensible, admirable, adorable, Divine!

III. IT IS ACCORDING TO ITS OWN LAWS, NOT OURS. In dealing with vegetation, there is much which we can do if we work *with* nature. We can till the soil, expose the seed to moisture and warmth, protect it from unfavourable conditions. But we cannot work *against* laws of nature; we cannot make pebbles grow, acorns produce elm trees, or barley yield a crop of wheat; we cannot grow the produce of the tropics at the poles. Providence has imposed laws upon nature, and with regard to life some things are possible, and others impossible. So spiritual life follows laws which we cannot change, and much of our interference has no influence or but little. The seed grows "of itself," *i.e.* as God appoints for it. The truth of God is not trammelled by our notions or fancies; the Spirit of God is not hampered by our rules. Men prove their own pettiness when they attempt to prescribe how the Divine seed shall grow. The Giver of the seed and Lord of the harvest does his work in his own way and time. He carries on a heavenly process in the conscience and the heart, in the bosom of human society. Vain is our fancy that we can rule the life. "Paul plants, Apollos waters, and God gives the increase."

IV. THE PROCESS IS USUALLY GRADUAL AND PROGRESSIVE. There is a regular law of development, "first the blade," etc. We never get the fruit first, the blade last. Everything in its season. So in the spiritual kingdom of God. In the child or the young convert, we look first for signs of life—the blade which proves that the seed has germinated. By Christian nurture, scriptural instruction, and Divine discipline, gradual and sure progress is made. The promise is partly realized when the ear is formed; it is the time of vigour and manifest growth. Then with the long and profitable years comes the full corn—the ripeness of Christian knowledge, experience, and service. A few favourable years bring the seedling to the sapling, and the sapling to the stalwart tree; a few months cover the broad brown tilth with the golden shocks. So in the Church of Christ we see the gradual unfolding of character, the gentle ripening of experience, one stage of growth left behind in making way for that which succeeds.

V. THE HARVEST IS THE END AND THE RECOMPENSE OF ALL. If the growth is unobtrusive, the harvest is conspicuous. The secret working has prepared for the open result. Life ends in fruit. It is so in the spiritual field. When there is ripeness, then the time has come for the sickle to be put in. The harvest is gathered, and the garner of God is filled with golden grain. Fruit is yielded upon earth; and the richest crop is reaped hereafter.

APPLICATION. 1. The Christian sower and labourer may learn to think humbly of himself, highly of his work. 2. There is encouragement for the "babes in Christ;" their stage of experience is the necessary preparation for the more complete fulfilment of the high purposes of God. 3. The glory must be given to God when life is vigorous and when fruit is ripe.

Vers. 30—32.—*The mustard seed.* The kingdom of God has its intension and its extension, its rule over the individual soul, and its sway over human society, its invisible work within and its manifest and mighty achievement without; it transforms

character and it renews the world. Perhaps it is fair to regard the preceding parable of "the seed growing secretly" as a parable of the history of the Word in the *heart*; and this of the mustard seed as a parable of the fortunes and destiny of the Word in the *world*. Our attention is here directed to—

I. THE SMALL AND INSIGNIFICANT BEGINNINGS OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM. The suggestions of nature here are many and striking. Not only does the tree begin with a seed, the eagle comes from an egg, the river is first a little rill, the fire is ignited by a spark, and every day, however gorgeous, begins with a faint and glimmering dawn. 1. The *Lord Jesus himself*, in his simplicity and humiliation, seemed most unlikely to be the Founder of the greatest of all kingdoms. "Despised and rejected of men," cast out, calumniated, and crucified, Jesus was as the grain of mustard seed. 2. The *apostles* of the Saviour were termed "ignorant and unlearned men," and were apparently little adapted to revolutionize the world. But in them God chose "the weak things of the world to confound the mighty." 3. The *early Church* may well have seemed to an observer to have had a poor prospect of growing into a world-embracing community. In many a thoughtful mind, only doubt and perplexity could arise as to "whereunto this thing should grow." Few, feeble, contemned, these little societies were, however, the earnest of a universal Church. It was then "the day of small things." 4. The very characteristics of Christianity gave little promise of the diffusion of this religion throughout the world. Its defiance of worldly principles and powers, its spirituality, its dependence upon unseen might, its warfare with prevailing error and sin,—all seemed prejudicial to its prospects of progress and victory.

II. THE SECRET OF THE PROGRESS OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM. The figurative language of the parable suggests what this is. It is the supernatural *life* which inspires it. Life comes from life; and the Divine vitality and growth of the Christian Church is owing to the indwelling of a heavenly principle and force. A Divine Saviour, a Divine Spirit, a Divine Word,—these account for the fact that Christianity lives and grows, expands and conquers, day by day and year by year. These alone explain its resistance alike of force and of corruption, its endurance amidst all changes of civilization, its permanence when all things else fleet, vanish, disappear.

III. THE DESTINED MAJESTIC GROWTH OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM. The Oriental mustard tree, with its large, strong branches, where the birds settle and eat the pungent seeds, beneath the shadow of which men rest, serves as an emblem of the vastness and capacious hospitality and ample provision of Christianity in its ultimate perfection. The records of our religion tell of noble character, of sublime heroism, of saintly devotion, of marvellous patience, of mature wisdom, of boundless benevolence. And all have sprung from that seed which fell into the ground and died eighteen centuries ago in Judæa. The progress of Christianity during the first centuries of persecution, its conquest of the barbarian conquerors, its purification under the Reformers, its modern missions to the East and to the South,—all prove its inherent vitality, and predict its ultimate universality of dominion. The predictions alike of the Old and New Testaments are glowing and inspiring, yet, in our own days, even calm calculation will not deem their fulfilment improbable, whilst faith beholds them already realized. The "kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ."

APPLICATION. 1. The discouraged may learn here a lesson of patience. The growth of knowledge, virtue, and piety, may be slow, but it is sure. "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit." 2. All labourers in Christ's cause may be of good cheer; for what has been beheld of progress is enough to inspire with confidence and animate to toil: "Your labour will not be in vain in the Lord."

Vers. 35—41.—*The storm: the two questions.* The scene here depicted by the evangelist is an emblem of the condition, of the needs, of the fears, of the Church of Christ; and of the perpetual presence, the brotherly care, the Divine dignity, of the Lord. The disciples were on the Sea of Genesaret; and we are upon the sea of life—of this uncertain world. They took Christ with them in the boat; and we have him with us always. A storm arose and threatened their safety; and we, as long as we are here, are exposed to the tempests of trial, doubt, and danger. Jesus slept; and to us it sometimes seems as though he had forgotten and abandoned us. At the disciples' cry, Jesus arose and stilled the storm; and never can we call upon him without

experiencing his friendly and effectual interposition. He reproached the faithless; and for us too he has often a word of expostulation. His authority impressed the disciples' minds with reverence; and never can we contemplate his character and his saving might without renewing our faith and adoration. There are two questions in the record which represent the two movements of the narrative.

I. THE QUESTION OF THE DISCIPLES, "HAST THOU NO CARE?" It was the cry of impulse, and a cry which has often sprung from the heart of the Lord's people in their griefs and dangers. 1. A cry of *fear*. Christians have the same natural passions as other men. In times of bodily danger, in scenes of public commotion and disaster, in circumstances of threatening and suffering to the Church, the fears of Christ's people have often been awakened. "We perish!" "Carest thou not?" "Save us!" Such are the exclamations uttered by imperilled, anxious, and terrified souls. 2. A cry, evincing some *faith*. If the disciples had been altogether without faith, they would not have appealed to Jesus, they would not have called him "Master!" they would not have entreated him to save them. So, when in our distress we call upon the Lord that he will deliver us, we prove that we have some faith in him whose help we seek. 3. A cry, however, evincing *defect of faith*. If the disciples' faith in their Master had been perfect, they would not have given way to panic, and they would not have been rebuked. Our attitude of spirit often proves the deficiency and imperfection of our confidence in our Lord. There was want of faith in his *knowledge*. Did he not, though sleeping, understand their danger and their need? A want of faith in his *interest and care*. He did care; and they ought, even in such circumstances, to have felt assured of this. A want of faith in his habitual *rule*. Though slumbering, he was nature's Lord. And how often are we, Christ's people, guilty of overlooking, in our distresses, the acquaintance of Jesus with our case, the power of Jesus over our foes, the love of Jesus for our souls!

II. THE QUESTION OF THE CHRIST, "HAVE YE NO FAITH?" Well might Jesus appeal thus to his disciples. Often had they experienced his power. Always had he justified their confidence. Never had he forgotten or forsaken them. How justly may our Lord address a similar expostulation to us when we are ready to abandon ourselves to sorrow and to despair! 1. *No faith*, when there is such an *Object of faith*? Christ has shown himself, by his character and his work, to be deserving of all faith; and when we have least confidence in ourselves or our fellow-men we may well have all confidence in him. 2. *No faith* when in human life there is so much *need of faith*? From danger, temptation, sorrow, sin, there is no exemption. If we throw up faith in Christ, we throw up all. 3. *No faith*, when we have so many *examples and instances* to justify faith? Refer to Old Testament history in the light of Heb. xi.; refer to the Gospel narratives of the centurion, of the Canaanite woman, etc.; refer to the instances of our Lord's gracious reply to the appeal and prayer of faith;—and ask if there is any excuse for withholding faith. 4. *No faith*, when *absence of faith must leave the heart desolate and helpless*? What do you lose and forfeit if you are without confidence in Christ? Peace of mind, strength for life's conflicts, hope in suffering and in age and in death. Can we forego all these? 5. *No faith*, when there is such express *encouragement* to trust in Christ? He himself invites our confidence: "Believe in me;" "Be not faithless, but believing;" "Have ye not yet faith?"

APPLICATION. 1. Let the unbelieving repent of their unbelief, and look unto and call upon Jesus; that henceforth, knowing his grace, they may surely trust in him. 2. Let the doubting Christian be encouraged to put away his fears, and to pray, "Lord, increase our faith!" 3. Let the believing Christian remember that Christ's people can never perish.

"With Christ in the vessel,
I smile at the storm."

4. Let all who experience the Saviour's delivering power and grace unite in adoring him and witnessing to him: "What manner of man is this?"

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The nature-preaching of Christ.* I. CIRCUMSTANCES OCCASIONING IT. The order of Matthew and Mark preferable and explanatory. Various considerations led him to adopt this method of teaching. 1. *A reasonable prudence.* His enemies were busy, and scarcely suffered a single opportunity to pass without spying or planning means by which to destroy him. Out of doors he would be able to keep the crowd at a greater remove, and so hostile listeners would be under better observation. 2. *Sympathy for those who were "without."* In the small country cottages, where for the most part he resided, there was no accommodation for the numbers that thronged to his ministry. Stifling heat and inconvenient jostling would ill accord with the dignity of his message. Multitudes were unable to hear or see him, and he had compassion on their souls. A different class of people, too, might be reached by this new method. 3. *The charm of nature.* There are abundant evidences of Christ's poetic and artistic sense of nature. He would be drawn forth from the heat and squalor of the small cottage to the spaciousness, grandeur, and ever-varying phenomena of the outside world. It was his own world. He was present when "the morning stars sang together" at its birth, "and without him was not anything made that was made."

II. ADVANTAGES OF THIS MODE OF TEACHING. 1. *It linked the ideas of the spiritual world with the real world of every-day experience.* 2. *By its associating the common life of men with the Divine and eternal, the former was refined and elevated.* The many were thus addressed, and a certain general benefit received by them. 3. *The inner meaning of such teaching could only be discerned by the spiritual and devout, and thus his safety was secured.* His enemies were baffled and kept in ignorance. 4. *This teaching was attractive to all.*

III. WHAT IT SUGGESTED AS TO THE SPHERE AND FUNCTION OF THE "KINGDOM OF GOD." 1. *That it was coextensive with the universe.* 2. *That the heavenly element is to penetrate and include the earthly element in God's world.* 3. *That the senses, if rightly used, are aids to the spirit.*—M.

Vers. 3—9; 18—23.—*The parable of the sower.* The kingdom of God as—

I. A PRINCIPLE OF LIFE. Outwardly insignificant; exposed to the uncertainties of human agency and the vicissitudes of circumstance; yet embodying vital force, and capable under suitable conditions of producing its kind. Ever commencing anew, in germ and vital unit. A result as well as a cause, even as the seed is a fruit in the first instance. Requiring everything external of itself that is necessary to its being deposited in the minds of men to be done for it; yet containing an independent, original power of its own, viz. reproduction.

II. A PROCESS OF GROWTH. *Dependent upon:* 1. *Manner of its reception;* 2. *Character of the hearer, i.e. whether deep or shallow, thorough or otherwise, like the soil;* 3. *Place which it holds in human regard*—whether considered as the chief or only as a subordinate interest in life; 4. *Time,*—this in all cases.

III. A CONDITION OF FRUITFULNESS. The soul, just like the ground, if left alone, will be barren or overgrown with weeds. It must be tilled, sown, and tended. Sometimes these duties are divided, sometimes combined, but all are necessary. 1. *All true believers are not alike fruitful.* This is analogous to material and mental culture. 2. *It is enough if each brings forth according to capacity and ability.* 3. *In all cases there is compensating power of increase in the Word, beyond the natural qualities and powers of the believer, although a certain relation is always observed to the proportion of faith and diligence.* The blessing of God is especially manifest in the fruits of the Word.—M.

Vers. 3—9; 18—23.—*The parable of the sower.* As illustrating the purpose of God in his Word.

I. TRUTH IS MEANT FOR ALL MEN.

II. TRUTH IS OFFERED TO ALL.

III. IT IS RECEIVED BY MANY DIFFERENT SORTS OF PEOPLE, AND IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

IV. IT IS FRUITFUL ONLY WITH A FEW.—M.

Vers. 3—9; 18—23.—*The parable of the sower.* As exhibiting the kingdom of God—

- I. IN ITS BEGINNINGS.
- II. ITS PROCESSES.
- III. ITS RESULTS.—M.

Vers. 3, 9.—*Christ's claim upon the attention of men.* "Hearken!" "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear!" A frequent peculiarity in Christ's speech. It is well to note when he uses it. It is the whisper of Christ. John seems to have caught and represented this manner of the Master most closely.

I. THE VALUE OF THE STATEMENTS OF THE GOSPEL. 1. *Affecting the personal interest of every one.* Happiness or misery, life or death. 2. *Determining the character of every one.* 3. *The condescension and compassion of infinite love.*

II. THE DIFFICULTY OF GIVING THEM THE ATTENTION AND CONSIDERATION THEY DESERVE. 1. *They appeal to the least-developed side of human nature.* 2. *They have little or no immediate earthly interest to commend them.* 3. *They have commoner and more latent meanings, and the latter may not be apprehended.* 4. *They have many counterfeits.* "Lo here! Lo there!" 5. *The earthly life of men is full of distractions.*

III. THE RESPONSIBILITY ATTACHING TO THEM. This remains with the hearer, and he cannot free himself. The language of Scripture and the deepest experiences of human nature alike assure us of this. 1. *God has given all men power to understand and receive his gospel.* That is, of course, provided they have not lost their reason. 2. *Personal moral effort is required with respect to them.* (1) To cease delaying. (2) To use what faculty and opportunity we have. (3) To suppress prejudice, aversion, sin, etc.—M.

Ver. 11.—*The reward of discipleship.* The sense of the word "mystery." Eleusinian and other heathen mysteries. Something previously hidden, but revealed in the gospel; or rather, something hidden from certain conditions of the moral nature of man, but revealed to other conditions.

I. IT AGREES WITH THE MANIFEST END OF DISCIPLESHIP. The learner seeks for knowledge. The disciple of any master desires to receive his special doctrine or discovery. It is the highest, the esoteric, teaching that is here promised. There are to be no secrets or reserves between the Master and his disciples. Revelation not the mere anticipation of experience, but its determining influence and its consummation.

II. IT IS BEYOND THE COMPASS OF UNAIDED HUMAN FACULTY. Christ said, "*To you it is given.*" They were not to discover it of themselves. 1. *The noblest saints who had preceded them were not able to understand* (1 Pet. i. 10—12). 2. *The wisdom of man could not discover them.* "Eye hath not seen," etc. (1 Cor. ii. 8—10; cf. Eph. i. 15—23; Col. i. 9, seq.).

III. IT IS A DIVINE GRACE FOR MORAL PURPOSES. This appears from the negatives of ver. 12. To produce: 1. *Repentance and faith.* 2. *Sympathy with Christ in his aims, works, and sufferings.* 3. *Triumphant superiority to the evil circumstance of the world*—M.

Ver. 13.—*From one learn all.* I. THIS IS A PRINCIPLE NOT TO BE UNIVERSALLY ACTED UPON IN EARTHLY THINGS. Because of: 1. *Limitation of human powers.* 2. *Obscurity, complexity, and occasional discontinuity and non-uniformity of nature and human life.*

II. TO THOSE WHO ARE ILLUMINATED IT IS ABSOLUTELY VALID IN DIVINE THINGS. 1. *Not because the forms and successive stages of the truth are mere repetitions of one another.* 2. *But they are all centred and interpreted in one Person.* 3. *They all require the exercise of the same spiritual faculty.*—M.

Vers. 21, 22.—*Revelation and not concealment the final purpose of the truth.* I. THIS APPEARS FROM: 1. *Its very nature.* That which reveals (e.g. light) is not to be itself hidden. Its whole tendency is and has been towards greater manifestation. Each revelation of God has been grander than that which preceded. 2. *Its central signifi-*

cance in the Divine economy. It has evidently a practical relation to the whole, just as "the lamp" had to the peasant's room, as the general means of illumination. Everything in the world, in human lives, and in the constitution of the human soul answers to its interpreting light, which is the only true light by which they can be understood.

3. *The existence in man of a faculty for its discernment.* This may have been overlaid or perverted; but it really exists, and will answer to the believing effort to exercise it. It is Satan, not God, who has blinded the minds of those who are lost.

II. HOW STRONG MUST HAVE BEEN THE REASONS FOR TEMPORARY CONCEALMENT!

1. *The fearful wickedness of the contemporaries of Jesus.* A last time with reference to many preceding stages of darkening spiritual consciousness. 2. *The revelation of that wickedness in convicting it of ignorance of Divine things.* 3. *The preservation of the Personal Truth in human form until his manifestation should be complete.*—M.

Vers. 24, 25.—"*Measure for measure; or, the law of equity in its relation to Divine knowledge.* A wider law (Matt. vii. 2) with special application to spiritual learning. One of the phases of the exactitude of relation between God and man, which yet admits of grace and blessing.

I. THE WORD OF GOD MUST BE RIGHTLY ATTENDED TO IN ORDER TO ITS BEING UNDERSTOOD. There is no process of mere mechanical transfer of truth into the nature of man. Experience and progress in truth are subject to the conditions of all intellectual inquiry, and also to special moral ones.

II. ACCORDING TO THE PROPORTION OF HEARING WILL BE THE SPIRITUAL BENEFIT.

1. *It is to the use of faculties, and not to their mere possession, the reward attaches.* 2. *The communication of truth is therefore a spiritual discipline.* "Quicquid recipitur, recipitur ad modum recipientis." Obedience is the gateway of knowledge. "Holding the truth in unrighteousness," we shall sooner or later lose it; holding it "in a pure conscience" and a willing spirit, we shall advance to the fulness of truth.—M.

Vers. 26—29.—*The seed cast upon the earth; or, the self-development of truth in the heart of man.* I. THERE IS A PRE-ESTABLISHED HARMONY BETWEEN THE TRUTH AND HUMAN NATURE. The seed left in the soil germinates because of the mutual adaptation; so the Word of God.

II. THE WORD OF THE KINGDOM HAS AN INNATE POWER OF DEVELOPMENT. Under the appointed conditions it is bound to grow.

III. GOD DOES NOT INTERFERE WITH IT OR REMOVE IT UNTIL IT HAS PRODUCED ITS FRUIT. 1. *It is left to the law of gradualness.* First "the blade," etc. 2. *It is taken account of and judged in its final result.*—M.

Vers. 26—29.—*Man used and then dispensed with.* I. WHAT GOD DOES BY AND THROUGH HIS SERVANTS. *The mere sowing of the seed.* 1. Receiving the seed for one's self. 2. Imparting it vitally to other minds.

II. WHAT GOD DOES WITHOUT HIS SERVANTS. The pre-existence and independent growth of the seed a great mystery. Its hidden processes provocative of spiritual discipline to the sower. In God's hand and the womb of time (Ps. lxxv.). Committing it thereto, and leaving it there, a proof and exercise of faith.

III. RESULTANT RESPONSIBILITIES. 1. *The harvest* a living growth, not a dead, mechanical effect; manifold in its producing, modifying, and enriching causes, one in result. 2. *Judgment on sower and sown alike.* It is in the final product that the evidence as to faithfulness, obedience, and diligence is found.—M.

Vers. 30, 31.—"*Whereunto shall we liken it?*" An invitation to mutual effort of spiritual thought and imagination. An instance of sympathetic condescension.

I. THERE ARE MANY SIMILITUDES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

II. SOME ARE BETTER THAN OTHERS. Either absolutely or relatively to present circumstances.

III. WE ARE NOT TO BE ONLY PASSIVE RECIPIENTS OF CHRIST'S TEACHING.

IV. SAINTS ENJOY FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST IN THE DISCOVERY OF TRUTH AND IN SPIRITUAL REALIZATION.—M.

Ver. 34.—"Without a parable spake he not unto them." To be understood of Christ's general habit or manner of teaching. It was specially characteristic of him after it became evident that the Pharisees were seeking an occasion for his destruction. This practice proved—

I. THE VASTNESS OF HIS SPIRITUAL RESOURCES. 1. *When prevented from using direct statements, he adopted an indirect mode of expression.* The truth was not stifled, it only assumed another form. There was not the least sign of labour or effort in making this transition. He played upon the varying moods and appearances of nature as a skilled musician upon his instrument, so as not only to discourse sweet sounds, but to suggest Divine ideas and principles. His supplies of spiritual truth must have been as inexhaustible as nature itself. He must have had many modes and degrees of expression in which to clothe the same truth. Restriction of speech in one direction only developed a larger liberty in another. 2. *In order to this his perception of truth must have been of a very deep and vital nature.* His parables were not only facile, they were felicitous. In them truth lived and breathed. It is not as more or less distant analogies one reads them, but as one might look at the naked truth itself. How instinctively must he have discerned the Divine side of things! And there is in his figurative teaching an unassuming originality, a vigour and vividness that could spring from nothing less than inward understanding of spiritual principles—a practical, sympathetic familiarity with them in their root and essence. The author of such similitudes cannot be conceived of as standing apart from Divine truth, but as one with it; therefore the conclusion, "I am the Truth," is inevitable.

II. HIS DIDACTIC SKILL. The parables are beautiful, but it is not as creations of artistic genius that they chiefly impress us. Jesus was not the slave of his imagination. A careful adaptation of means to ends is perceptible in all his utterances. You feel that he did not want to paint a beautiful picture, but simply to tell the truth. The latter was thus rendered: (1) *self-demonstrative*; (2) *familiar and forcible*; and (3) *memorable*.

III. HIS PRACTICAL MORAL PURPOSE. By his parables our Lord: 1. *Demonstrated the unity of creation.* The words and works of God were one in their meaning and message. A multitude of phenomena so varied and different, yet so mutually suggestive and harmoniously concurrent in testimony, could not be a soulless medley or a resultant of blind forces; it must be a system throughout, informed and controlled by one governing mind, and moving onward to a worthy if at present inadequately apprehended end. 2. *Redeemed nature and human life from base associations.* "In everything there was discernible the idea;" the humblest thing was suggestive, if rightly interrogated, of the Divine. Henceforth nothing was to be considered "common or unclean." 3. *Rendered human experience a Divine discipline.* Every-day events and circumstances were charged with spiritual lessons, and revealed as "working together for good to them that love God."—M.

Vers. 30—32.—*The grain of mustard seed; or, the growth of the kingdom of God relatively to its beginnings.* **I. THE BEGINNINGS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AS COMPARED WITH THOSE OF OTHER INFLUENCES AFFECTING THE WORLD'S LIFE, ARE VERY SMALL AND INSIGNIFICANT.** A parable and a prophecy. Two plants, either of which might have been referred to by Christ—*Sinapis Orientalis*, a garden herb, bushy in habit, with black or white seeds, from four to six in a pod, or the *Salvadora Persica*, commonly known as the tree mustard; the latter the most likely. The comparison expressed in the phrase, "the least of all seeds," is a free one, and not to be understood absolutely. How minute and obscure have been the first origins of Christianity! The Incarnation; the upper room at Jerusalem. The first throb of repentance; the dawning power to resist temptation; the first acts of faith and charity; the first words of invitation and appeal. As a *seed*, it has been for the most part hidden; as a *plant*, it has seemed in its first upspringing like the herbs. This is true of (1) the understanding of the kingdom of God; (2) of interest in spiritual things; (3) of spiritual influence. 1. *It contrasts in this respect with powers founded on force, material advantages, prestige, or accidental circumstances.* Political empire; military aggrandizement; advance of mechanical arts and material improvements. 2. *In this respect it resembles but far exceeds the moral and intellectual movements that have marked the progress of the world:* philosophies, civilization, the sentiment of humanity, growth of science, etc.

II. ITS ULTIMATE DIMENSIONS WILL BE DISPROPORTIONATELY VAST. 1. *It grows according to its own law, yet imperceptibly.* As the bud into the rose, the village into the city. 2. *It becomes comprehensive.* Other forces and vital principles are revealed as in relation to it and ultimately included. 3. *Its increase is in the direction of beneficence and universal blessing.* The truth of the epithet, "Mother Church." All the best interests of humanity are included and protected. It saves and ennobles whatever it affiliates. 4. *This is due to its own inherent genius;* not an accident. Circumstances have not favoured Christianity, but it has grown in spite of opposition, and converted obstacles into auxiliaries, enemies into friends. It is an absolutely central, and therefore the only truly universal, principle.—M.

Vers. 33, 34.—*The parable an instrument of mercy and judgment.* **I. AN INSTRUMENT OF JUDGMENT.** 1. *As concealing more than it revealed to the popular mind.* 2. *As convicting men of sinful ignorance and spiritual incapacity.*

II. AN INSTRUMENT OF MERCY. 1. *The Word of God was not wholly withdrawn.* 2. *This, the only practicable form of teaching that remained to Christ, was used with constant regard to the benefit of the hearers.* 3. *The desire for Divine knowledge was thereby stimulated.* 4. *Further instruction was ever attainable by sincere inquirers.*—M.

Vers. 35—41.—*Christ and his disciples in the storm.* The service of Christ—

I. CONSISTING IN OBEDIENCE, SYMPATHY, AND CO-OPERATION.

II. INVOLVING HARDSHIP AND APPARENT RISK.

III. A TRIAL AND DISCIPLINE OF FAITH. 1. *Left to the realization of imminent destruction.* 2. *Discovering the weakness of the carnal nature.* 3. *Affording opportunity for the moral teaching of the Master.*

IV. A REVELATION OF THE DIGNITY AND POWER OF CHRIST. "This is the first of a second group of miracles. Those before mentioned are cures of bodily disease. These are deliverances from other adverse influences—the elements of nature, evil spirits, and the sins of men. Christ has authority also over these" (Godwin, on Matt. viii. 23). "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" The great inference: Although indefinite, yet practically a complete demonstration of Christ's Godhood.—M.

Vers. 35—41.—*The Church in the world.* Communion with Christ in—

I. SEPARATION.

II. TRIAL AND APPARENT DANGER.

III. MUTUAL SYMPATHIES AND CARES.

IV. FINAL VICTORY AND ATTAINMENT.—M.

Vers. 37—39.—*The Christian's extremity Christ's opportunity.* **I. THE CHRISTIAN FREQUENTLY SUFFERED TO ENTER INTO APPARENT PERIL.** 1. *Outward losses and troubles.* Persecution in its various phases and degrees. The major calamities of life. Everything seems against him, and he is continually disappointed; yet the objects sought are reasonable and proper. 2. *Inward griefs and fears.* Self-questionings as to being in a state of grace; as to whether or not God's favour has been turned away; doubts; prevailing sins.

II. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES ORDINARY MEANS OF DELIVERANCE ARE OF NO AVAIL. The ordinances of the Church fail to comfort or strengthen. Work for Christ becomes distasteful and mechanical. Prayer itself appears to be unanswered, etc.

III. THE REASONS FOR THIS. 1. *To correct and strengthen character.* Besetting weakness is discovered; defective principles of belief are exposed; the backward graces of the Spirit are stimulated; the whole nature is roused to keener sensitiveness, and awakened to the solemn responsibility and greatness of the Divine life. 2. *A more signal and immediate manifestation of God is vouchsafed.* (1) To create a closer and higher communion, and a more vivid sense of the supernatural, and to deepen and correct the creed of the believer. A conscious dependence upon his heavenly Father takes the place of the former distance and semi-legalism. Self and self-dependence are subdued, and practical faith made the daily experience. One such great and signal providence may do more than anything else to elevate and confirm the spiritual life. (2) To be a sign to them that are without. For a "means of grace," or simply as a

warning and an undeniable demonstration, which may make them, with the devils, "believe and tremble" even in their rebellion.—M.

Vers. 38, 40.—*Human and Divine remonstrances.* Christ and his disciples chide one another, yet gently and affectionately. Representative positions—

I. AS SUGGESTING THE OPPOSITE STANDPOINTS FROM WHICH PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE MAY BE REGARDED.

II. AS FURNISHING THEIR SOLUTION.—M.

Ver. 1.—*Divine teaching from the fisherman's boat.* Matthew gives us, in the thirteenth chapter of his Gospel, a series of seven parables, which correspond with the three which Mark records here. They all illustrate the nature and the progress of the kingdom of God which Christ sought to establish. The parable of the sower describes the founding of the kingdom, and the various difficulties with which it would meet; the parable of the seed growing secretly teaches us that its progress would be natural, unostentatious, and certain; while the parable of the mustard seed declares that in its final consummation it would have wide-reaching influence. The second of these is peculiar to Mark. We propose to consider, not the parables themselves, but the circumstances under which they were uttered, which also suggest and illustrate truths concerning the kingdom. Our Lord's teaching from the fisherman's boat suggests the following thoughts:—

I. THAT HOSTILITY MAY CHANGE OUR METHOD, BUT MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO PREVENT OUR WORK. The Pharisees had become openly antagonistic to our Lord. Their spies followed him everywhere. Their controversial champions argued with him and misrepresented him in the synagogues. This hostility drove the Lord from the sanctuaries of his people. He would not suffer his Father's house to be desecrated by such tactics. Accordingly, he no longer, as a rule, was found in the synagogues, but in the fields and streets, in the homes of the people, or in the fishing-boats that rocked on the Sea of Galilee. He thus acted on the principle he laid down for his disciples when he said to them, "If they persecute you in one city, flee to another." And that principle still holds good, and may have the widest application. St. Paul acted on it when he adapted himself, under varying circumstances, to the conditions of his hearers. If he addressed the people of Lystra, he did not argue from the Old Testament, of which they knew nothing, but pointed to the mountains and fields, and spoke of the God who gave them "fruitful seasons." If he was surrounded by Athenians in their beautiful city, he referred to the temples which crowned the Acropolis, and to the statues which adorned the Agora. If he was in the synagogue at Antioch, in Pisidia, he argued from the sacred Scriptures, the authority of which his hearers acknowledged. He became "all things to all men, if by any means he might win some;" and in this he followed in the footsteps of the great Teacher, who, when refused a fair hearing in the synagogue, preached beside the open sea. Thus, with the utmost flexibility and freedom, Christian workers should alter their methods to meet the changing circumstances in which they find themselves; never for a moment losing sight of the object they have set before themselves, but seeking to attain that by the most suitable means. This may be applied to those who preach or teach, whether amongst the sceptical or the indifferent, among the children or the cultured.

II. THAT THERE IS NO PLACE WHERE GOD'S WORK MAY NOT BE DONE. The change in method, indicated by the text, did not trouble our Lord as it would have troubled any one to whom place and mode seem everything in worship. All the earth was holy in his eyes. The heavenly Father was near him everywhere. The rippling of the sea or the rustling of the corn would be more grateful to him than the murmured repetitions of formal prayers by the mechanical and unspiritual worshippers in the synagogue. Apart from persecution, he would often have chosen, from preference, such a sphere of work as this, as indeed he did when he preached the sermon on the mount. Read his teaching to the woman of Samaria (John iv. 20, 21), and see how acceptable to God is spiritual worship wherever it may be offered. Study the parable that immediately follows our text, and you will notice that the sower threw out his seed broadcast upon all kinds of soil. Our Lord would preach in a Pharisee's house, or on a mountain, or from a boat, as readily as in a synagogue or in the temple; for "Holiness to the Lord"

(Zech. xiv. 20) was written everywhere, and he accounted "nothing common or unclean" (Acts x. 15). Too often Christian workers select their little sphere for service, and strictly confine themselves to it, contented that multitudes should be left untouched who might easily be brought under their influence. The true sower is willing to scatter his seed broadcast.

III. THAT THE MODE OF OUR LORD'S TEACHING MADE HIS UTTERANCES MORE WIDELY ACCEPTABLE. This was not only true of his own day, but of ours. Publicans, lepers, and outcasts, excluded from the synagogue, could hear him on the beach; and all "the common people heard him gladly," for he spake "as one having authority, and not as the scribes." It is well for us also that it was so. There is wonderfully little local colouring about his words; a marvellous freedom from such theological technicalities as the rabbis were wont to use; and his teaching, therefore, comes home to us as it never would have done if couched in the phraseology currently used for the interpretation of the Law. His utterances are fragrant with the fresh air, and they ring with a pleasant freedom, for which we cannot be too thankful; for what might have been Jewish is human, and the words of him who called himself, not "the Son of David," but the "Son of man," are so simple and natural, that there is not a fisherman on our coasts, not a merchant in our streets, not a housewife in our homes, not a sower in our fields, who may not know something of the meaning and beauty of the doctrine of the great Teacher who has come from God.

IV. THAT OUR LORD'S POSITION IN THE FISHING-BOAT IS A SIGN OF THE TRANSIENT NATURE OF ABUSED PRIVILEGES. Christ in the boat has often been regarded as an emblem of Christ in his Church. From both he preaches to the world. The Church, in comparison with the world it seeks to influence, is small, as the boat with the few in it was small compared with the crowds listening upon the beach; and her comparative poverty may be represented by that fisherman's barque, which had about it, we may be sure, no costly adornment. But small and poor as the Church may seem, and the Christ who is in it, she is *free* as the Master was, who could in a moment leave those who were hostile or unresponsive, and pass over to the other side (Luke viii. 37). There are yet to be found amongst us the impenitent and foolhardy, to whom he will have to say, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh."—A. R.

Vers. 4—8.—*Human hearts tested by truth.* "The seed is the Word." Such is the interpretation given by the Lord himself, in his exposition of the parable of the sower. In other words, the seed represents the truth uttered by Christ and embodied in Christ, who is himself declared to be the everlasting Word (John i. 1). This heavenly seed is the gift of God. It has life in itself (John v. 26); it is the germ of life to the world; and, when it is received, it brings forth those "fruits of the Spirit" of which St. Paul speaks. The mode in which that seed is received is a test of character, and this is illustrated in the words before us. The four kinds of soil upon which the sower cast his seed represent four conditions of heart, which we propose to consider.

I. THE HARDENED HEART. Our Lord speaks of some seed falling by the *wayside*; that is, on the trodden pathway running through the field, which is impervious to anything which falls gently, as seed falls. Finding a lodgment there, either the birds carry it away or else it is crushed by the foot of the wayfarer. Just as the once soft soil becomes hard, so do our moral sensibilities become blunted by the frequent passing over them of ordinary duties, and still more of evil words and deeds. We often read in Scripture of the hardening of the heart. Pharaoh is said to have "hardened his heart" because, after being stirred to some thought by the earlier plagues in Egypt, he conquered feeling until he became past feeling. Hence, after the most terrible of the plagues, he pursued God's chosen people to his own destruction. The Israelites, too, hardened their hearts in the wilderness. All the issues of this sin recorded in sacred history give a significant answer to the question of Job, "Who hath hardened himself against God, and prospered?" This process still goes on, not least amongst regular attendants on the means of grace. Address a gathering of outcasts, and though you may hear a mocking laugh, you will more probably see the penitential tear as you speak of the Saviour's death and of the Father's love; but speak of this to those who have

often heard the truth, and their calm impassivity will drive you to despair, if it does not drive you to God. He who knows all but feels nothing is represented by the wayside; for the truth preached to him is gone as swiftly from his thoughts as though evil birds had carried it away.

II. THE SUPERFICIAL HEART is also graphically portrayed. The stony ground is not ground besprinkled with stones, but rocky soil covered with a thin layer of earth, such as might often be seen in the rocky abutments which ended the terraces of cultivated soil on a hillside in Palestine. Seed falling there would take root and grow, but would soon strike rock, and then withering would begin. This represents those who "receive the Word with gladness." They are interested, instructed, impressed; but they have no understanding of its spiritual meaning or of Christ's requirements. They have no sense of sin, and no conflict with it. Their knowledge and experience alike are shallow, and they have "no root," because they have no depth of nature. Very significant is the phrase, "They have no root *in themselves*;" for there is a want of individuality about them. Their faith depends upon surrounding excitement and enthusiasm, and they are wanting in the perseverance which can only arise from personal conviction. Let temptation come to them, and they give up at once their poor shreds of faith; let them go among sceptics, and soon their mockery will be the loudest; let persecution arise, and straightway they stumble to their fall.

III. THE CROWDED HEART. "Some fell among thorns;" that is, in soil in which thorns were springing up. The soil possibly was good, and therefore unlike the last, but it was already *full*. Soon the thorns springing up choke the seed, crowding it down, and so depriving it of air and sunshine that the withering stalk can produce no fruit. Every one knows the meaning of this who has pondered the words, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," or who understands the warning against "the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches," and inordinate desires after other earthly things. Here is such a one. He was once earnest in work for God; he made time for the study of his Word; he was eager for the quiet hour when he could speak to his Father in secret. But this is only a memory to him now. And how came the woeful change? There has been no hour when he has deliberately cut himself adrift from holy influence, nor can he recall any special crisis in his history. But the cares of life, the plans he felt called upon to make, thoughts concerning money and the best way to make it or to keep it, obtruded themselves more and more, even on sacred times, till holy thoughts were fairly crowded out. Thorns have sprung up, and they have choked the seed, so that it has become unfruitful.

IV. THE HONEST HEART. The seed which fell into "good ground" not only sprang up into strong stalk, but brought forth fruit in the golden harvest-time, and over it the sower rejoiced. Our Lord often spoke of the conditions which are essential to the fulfilment of this in the spiritual realm. For example, he said, "He that is of the truth heareth my voice;" and he bade his disciples become as little children, that they might rejoice in him. Nathanael was a beautiful example of what Jesus meant. When the truth is thus received, in the love of it, it guides the thoughts, rules the affections, checks and controls the plans, and sanctifies the whole being of the man. "Christ is formed" in his heart "the hope of glory." Abiding in prayer, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he experiences a quickening and a refreshment like that which the growing corn has when enriched and blessed by showers and sunshine, and "the fruits of the Spirit" appear in him, to the glory of God the Father. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."—A. R.

Vers. 15—20.—*The perils and the prospects of the good seed of the kingdom.* The importance of the parable of the sower is shown by the prominence given to it by the evangelists, and by the question of our Lord in the thirteenth verse, "Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?" In some respects it was the basis of similar teaching, while the key to its interpretation, given by the Lord himself, opens the door of other mysteries. The illustration is an analogy, going deeper than many suppose. Husbandry was the appointment of God when man dwelt in the bliss of paradise, before the Divine order had been interfered with by human sin and self-will. Even in man's unfallen state, seed had to be sown and cared for, while the blessing of heaven was always essential to its productiveness. He who made the first

Adam a sower in things natural, made the second Adam a Sower in what was spiritual. Our Lord referred to himself and to all who follow him in his work when he said, "Behold, the sower went forth to sow." Now, soil and seed are essential to each other. Many a man has the "honest and good heart;" but he must not be content with that, for, as the richest soil will remain empty unless seed be in it, so even such a heart will be unproductive of spiritual results without Christ, the true and living Word. While the soil is thus useless without the seed, the seed is unproductive without the soil. Hence Christ urged men to receive him, and hence he said of his teaching, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Christian truth may be intellectually known and propagated, but the world is only the richer for it as it becomes the inspiration of human hearts. Christ's words must be translated into men's lives, that they may be read as "living epistles." In a sense, the Lord himself must become incarnate in each of his followers (Col. i. 27). For the world's sake, as well as our own, may we receive the seed of the kingdom! This parable speaks of—

I. THE PERILS WHICH THREATEN THE GOOD SEED. Let us seek to recognize them in the various thoughts which contend for the mastery with Christ's truth. 1. *Evil thoughts*. They come through companions, from books, etc., but find their source in Satan (ver. 15). Often we find that they are most intrusive just after or during our holiest hours. They are like the birds of prey which swooped down on Abraham's sacrifice when he was making his covenant with God (Gen. xv.). Like him, we must seek by constant watching and effort to drive them away. 2. *Vacant thoughts*. The foolish habit of letting thoughts wander as they list, settling nowhere on what is definite or dignified, is a characteristic of the shallow characters represented by the rocky soil. Earnest conviction and the abiding stability which follows it cannot belong to these. Well is it when each can say, "I hate vain thoughts, but thy Law do I love." 3. *Anxious thoughts*. "The cares of this world" (ver. 19) are destructive of the serenity and rest which Christ's true disciples should always rejoice in. Therefore our Lord so urgently warns us against them (Matt. vi. 25—34). St. Paul says, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God," and then "the peace of God . . . shall keep your hearts." 4. *Adverse thoughts*. "The lusts of other things" so absorb some that their minds are like a soil full of growing thorns. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Judas Iscariot was a terrible example of this. It would be useless to point out such perils as these if it were not that our hearts are not like the soil, which is destitute of will, of effort, and of a voice to cry to Heaven. Our condition largely depends upon our choice, or rather on the prayer which is the outcome of it; so that it is not in vain that we have guarded ourselves against the perils which beset the seed. From them let us turn to consider—

II. THE PROGRESS WHICH AWAITS THE SEED in various hearts. 1. *Swiftly gone*, devoured by the birds, i.e. dissipated or destroyed by other thoughts. Warn against the flippancy and worldliness of much conversation in Christian homes on the Lord's day, and point out the injury which young people may thus receive. 2. *Springing soon, withering soon*. This is specially seen in sentimental natures. There is a shallowness in thought and experience from which we should earnestly pray for deliverance. It is well when such underlying rock is broken up by the plough of affliction. 3. *Growing, not fruit-bearing*. This is the condition of many professed Christians, whose homes witness to unconquered tempers and whose Churches mourn unattempted service. 4. *Producing fruit and increase*. All do not bring forth the same fruit, either in kind or in degree. Still we see the "thirtyfold," the "sixtyfold," and the "hundredfold," according to the gift and capacity of each. God only expects of us according to that which we have, and not according to that which we have not. The different talents entrusted to the servants (Matt. xxv.) remind us of this; yet that every one of them could win the reward of him who had been "good and faithful." Allude to various examples of fruit-bearing among Christians, e.g. the quiet ministrations in the home, of which no one outside it hears; the steadfast adherence to Christian principle when slight swerving from it would bring an advantage, which as a keen man he is quick to see, but as a devout man is swift to spurn; the privilege of writing words which go forth to unseen multitudes, stirring in them loftier thoughts of God and of his Word and works; the pleasantness of the gentle girl who at school or

at home thinks of every one before herself; the influence of the brave lad whose "wholesome tongue is a tree of life," etc. Each of these bears fruit, and that fruit is the new seed from which future harvests spring.—A. R.

Vers. 26—29.—*The progress of Divine life in the soul.* Mark alone records this parable. It occupies the position of the parable of the tares in Matt. xiii., following "the sower," preceding "the mustard seed," but is not to be identified with it. It teaches us that Divine life, like ordinary seed, requires time for its development, that its growth is unnoticed and but little dependent upon human interference, and that it will have a glorious consummation.

I. THE GROWTH OF THE DIVINE LIFE. 1. *It is secret* (ver. 27). Man "knoweth not how" the seed springs. Our "natural laws" are little more than generalizations of observed facts, and afford no adequate explanation of the nature of life and growth. While we are busy or are resting the seed is quietly growing up under the care of God. We know but little more of the Divine life, even in ourselves. We know that we have it and that it produces certain effects, but of its essential nature our keenest analysis discovers but little. Still less do we know of the Divine life in others; and, as Christian teachers or parents, we must neither intrude upon it, as a child will do on growing seed, nor be over-anxious about it, as a foolish husbandman may be. With faith in God, leave it prayerfully to him, and "in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." 2. *It is independent* (ver. 28). The meaning of the phrase, "The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself," is this, that she has powers of developing life which exclude our agency, though they include God's agency. After sowing his seed, man may sleep or rise, leaving it to natural influences. We are not taught to be idle, but are reminded that we can do but little after sowing. In religious work we must never try to force growth by unnatural methods. First religious feelings are too sacred and delicate to be treated as they sometimes are. Intrusive and over-anxious teachers may sometimes do harm, not least in the confessional. The principle applies to our own life also. A morbid brooding over our own spiritual condition, a petty and constant measurement of our own feelings, is injurious. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap."

II. THE MANIFESTATION OF THE DIVINE LIFE. True seed, under favourable conditions, cannot keep hidden beneath the soil. It must grow, and, if it grows, it must ultimately be seen. Nor can we keep our spiritual life a secret from others if it be true; for in holy influence and loving deeds and devout life it must appear. This parable describes its gradual progress, representing it in three stages, which correspond with those represented by St. John (1 John ii.) in his references to "children," "young men," and "fathers." 1. *The blade* represents the "little children" in grace, "whose sins are forgiven for his Name's sake." A wise husbandman never despises the blades of corn. He knows their value, their tenderness, their possibilities. God has provided for their safety. When the wind sweeps over the fields they bend before it and are uninjured, though much that is stronger is swept away. So young Christians, though in some respects weak, give promise of the future, have a special grace and beauty of their own, and, amidst temptations under which those older fall, abide and appear more fresh and fair. 2. *The ear* represents the "young men," who have "overcome the wicked one." Here there is a loss of freshness, but a gain in strength. There is less enthusiasm, but more principle. The showers of adversity as well as the sunlight of prosperity are necessary to this. Speak of some who in special circumstances of temptation have proved the power of the grace of God. 3. *The full corn in the ear.* The "fathers," who have "known him that is from the beginning," are like the full-grown wheat, bending its head under the weight of the rich grain it bears, ready to be cut down and carried home. Such a one has a fulfilment of the promise, "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a good old age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

III. THE CONSUMMATION OF THE DIVINE LIFE. (Ver. 29.) Here the reference is to its earthly consummation only, for when the ripe corn is carried home, though it no longer adorns the field in which it grew, it is only beginning to fulfil its true destiny. The moment of death is the time when the reaper puts in the sickle, because the harvest is come; and the same sickle which destroys one life gives new energy to another and

higher life. Mortality is swallowed up of life. The outcome of time shall be the seed of eternity.—A. R.

Vers. 30—32.—*Great issues from small beginnings.* The lesson which our Lord intended to teach by the parable of the mustard seed is stated in the announcement of our subject. If he had wished to set forth the splendour of his kingdom, he would have chosen as an illustration the stately cedar or the fruitful vine. The mustard in its greatest growth is by no means majestic; but it is large in proportion to its seed, and although it was not literally “the smallest of seeds,” it was the smallest of those used in ordinary husbandry, and was proverbially used to denote what was little and despicable. All references to the supposed qualities of the seed, *e.g.* to its corrective power in disease, to its efficacy against venom, to its fiery vigour, to its giving out of virtue after being bruised, and so forth, appear to us beside the main purpose of the parable, which was to set forth the great issues which, in the kingdom of our Lord, would spring from small beginnings. This principle we propose now to illustrate.

I. IT IS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE EARTHLY HISTORY OF OUR LORD. In his history we see, as in a microcosm, the history of his Church. With limitless powers of choice, he selected for himself the most humble and obscure modes of ministry. His ways are not as our ways. Man makes a pretentious beginning, and often comes to a disastrous ending. The building of the Tower of Babel is a typical instance of this. Our Lord, who came to effect the stupendous work of redeeming the world, began by spending thirty years in comparative seclusion as a dependent infant, as an obedient child, as the son of a village carpenter. During his two or three years of public ministry his converts were few, and for the most part poor and ignorant. At last he died in agony and shame, amidst the hooting of a rabble and the hatred of the reputable; and his body was laid to rest in a borrowed grave. As we consider his life on earth, we see that it may be represented by a seed less in appearance than many others. But there was a fulfilment of his own words about himself, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”

II. IT IS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE SPECIAL DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY. They were not truths which would commend themselves to sensuous imaginations or to worldly hearts. They did not appear in such form and phrase as at once to win popular applause. Notice some of our Lord’s special doctrines as laid down in the sermon on the mount and elsewhere: *e.g.* happiness is to be found in the sacrifice of self; sin is to be hated, not because its results are painful, but because it is sin; outward obedience and large gifts and sacrifices are valueless in themselves, etc. After his crucifixion, this fact was still more prominent. Paul said, “We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” Indicate some of the reasons for the non-reception of Christian truth.

III. IT IS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. Christianity at the time of our Lord’s crucifixion appeared to be buried in the hearts of a few disciples and forgotten by the world. But on the spring day of Pentecost it appeared in a vigour and beauty which amazed all onlookers. It was like the bursting forth of forgotten seeds where you have been busily employed planting something else. Christianity rapidly spread. Give evidences of this from early Christians and from Suetonius, Pliny’s letter to Trajan, etc. This, humanly speaking, was the work of poor and illiterate men. Manifestly the result was due, not to the sower, but to the seed. Describe the condition and influence of the Christian Church now: the most powerful and civilized nations largely ruled by its authority; the indirect work it is doing through just laws, wholesome literature, philanthropic agencies, etc. Draw a contrast between the social and religious condition of the peoples now and at the time of Christ’s coming. The seed has become a tree, “so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.”

IV. IT IS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE EXPERIENCE OF EACH CHRISTIAN. “The kingdom of God” is not to be a something outside ourselves. We are not among its subjects because we can say, “This nation in which we dwell is Christian.” “The kingdom of heaven is *within* you,” said our Lord to his disciples. It is within us when we welcome Christ, its King, with all that he represents, to our own hearts to love and obey for evermore. That being so, a new life is ours, the test of whose vitality is to be found in growth

until every thought and affection and purpose (like the birds spoken of in this parable) dwell under its influence. If there has been no growth, let us examine ourselves. When a flower or plant is fading, drooping, and likely to die, we try to discover the cause. Perhaps it wants water, perhaps it is shut off from sunshine, perhaps it has been too long coddled under artificial heat and is therefore weakly, or perhaps a worm is gnawing at the root. If our spiritual life has no growth, let us ask why this is. We want showers of blessing, the sunshine of God's favour, independence of artificial stimulants, and above all, freedom from the sin which doth so easily beset us, and then we shall grow like plants of God's right hand planting.—A. R.

Vers. 1—25.—The duty of faithfully hearing the Word. He who taught by every act of his life, and who had already given many most important lessons with his lips, now, after the interruptions just recorded, "began to teach" more formally. It was "by the seaside," the multitude standing "by the sea on the land," and he "entered into a boat, and sat in the sea." "He taught them many things in parables." The first of these and one of the chief of the parables and the chiefest of all on the subject of "the Word," is, with its explanation, the key to many others. The lesson of the whole is summed up in the words of ver. 24, "Heed what ye hear." It was not without purpose that he spoke of hearing. All depends upon it. Noah, Moses, Paul, Jesus himself, will preach in vain if men hear not with care. The parable teaches—

I. THE ESPECIAL EVILS AGAINST WHICH MEN MUST GUARD IN HEARING THE WORD.

1. The first evil is losing the Word before faith has made it fruitful. "The parable is this: the seed is the Word of God." The kingdom of heaven grows from this seed only. By it alone is conviction of sin wrought; by it is faith begotten; by it Christ is revealed; by it regeneration is effected; by it the way of life is defined; by it are men sanctified; by it hope, and patience, and charity, and all graces are strengthened. This great lesson is, by both preachers and hearers, to be pondered. But the Word, by whomsoever sown, may be lost before it is fruitful. It may be taken out of the heart, out of the memory, from the understanding. "When they have heard, straightway cometh Satan, and taketh away the Word which hath been sown in them." 2. A second danger is from a mere temporary faith. There is "no deepness of earth," "no root in themselves." They "endure for a while." A little thing turns them away from that which they received "straightway with joy," but without counting the cost. 3. A third evil is the fruitlessness of the Word through the "cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things," especially "the pleasures of this life." The ground is good; the seed is good; it is well received and kept in the heart; yet is it choked. Yea, even God's good Word sown in the heart by Christ's own hand may be choked. This is a danger to which every believer is exposed. It is allowing other growths to sap this, other things to take up the time and attention, to absorb the interest, to steal the affections. The poor are in danger from "the cares of the world;" the rich from "the deceitfulness of riches." The parable teaches—

II. THE REWARD OF FAITHFUL HEARING. "He that hath, to him shall be given."

To him that hath as the fruit of his diligence, not simply what was given to him—all had this—to him shall be added the Lord's increase, over and above the natural consequences of his carefulness. He who so uses Divine truth as to be the better for it is in more favourable circumstances to receive and understand. Such know the truth, for "the mystery of the kingdom of God is given" to them. Every step in the ascent makes the next step possible. Truth grows to its perfection (that is to say, the character which is the product of truth) when it is "heard" and held fast in "an honest and good heart;" a heart inwardly good and outwardly honest; a heart honestly desiring the Word and acting honestly by it. To such there is "fruit, thirtyfold, and sixtyfold, and a hundred-fold." This is the truly prepared ground—ploughed, as could not be said of "the wayside" or the "stony ground." The parable further teaches—

III. THE CONDEMNATION OF HIM WHO HEARETH NOT TO PROFIT. 1. "He that hath not," *i.e.* hath not any fruit of his careful hearing, hath nothing more than was first given to him; "even that which he hath"—that which was given to him—"shall be taken away." Disregarded truth becomes disliked truth, and by him who does not use his understanding about it, it is naturally forgotten. So the condemnation takes the form of a removal of the truth. 2. In carelessness he puts the truth away from him. His

measure is small, so he metes it to himself. 3. To hear is a duty; to neglect brings God's condemnation. 4. He who does not so receive God's truth as to become a true subject of the kingdom of heaven, is in the kingdom of evil, and continued disobedience leaves the man further and further from God. 5. So truth assumes the form of a parable to him. His eye is dimmed. He sees only the outward word; of the inward meaning, which is experimental, he knows nothing. Even Christ, his work and his gospel, may be to men a mere parable. They know not "the things" which are spoken. Thus it is to be seen: (1) The terrible and to-be-dreaded consequence of not heeding the Word. It becomes a parable, a dark saying, a riddle. "If they hear not Moses," etc. (2) The mercifulness of him who would hide truth in a beautiful parable, to tempt the careless to inquire that they may be roused to effort and be saved. (3) The great lesson, "to hear the Word," "to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the same, that by patience and comfort of the Scriptures we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of ever lasting life, which is given to us in our Saviour Jesus Christ."—G.

Vers. 26—34.—*The kingdom of God further illustrated by parables.* No single parable holds the entire truth in itself; therefore, by "many such parables" Jesus "spake the Word unto" the multitude. Of those spoken at this time, St. Mark selects only two others besides that of the sower, and both of them, as was the first, are drawn from seeds. How suitable a simile of that kingdom, whose inherent, vital, self-expanding force is one of its most distinguishing features! These two parables stand related; the one leading us to think of the part "the earth" plays in bearing "fruit"—the power, as before we saw the duty, of the human heart to receive and to nourish the seed, to yield its due results; the other teaching the history of the little seed when received into suitable soil. This parable, the only one peculiar to St. Mark, is simple and very beautiful, and full of rich teaching. It embraces all the history of the seed in the heart, from its sowing, through its stages of growth, to its ripeness and ingathering. It may be summarized as—

THE LAW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 1. The human heart is the suitable "earth" for the heavenly seed. But one kind of seed, "the Word," is named. From this alone the kingdom grows. Yet the seed is not always sufficiently winnowed. The same hand sometimes scatters darnel with the wheat, or the gaudy, bright, but useless poppy. But seeds, bad and good, will grow together in the same field. What will not grow in the human heart! He who made the warm soil suitable for the growth of the useful herb for the service of man, and adapted the seed to the earth, has made the heart so that the best and highest truths will grow therein. There, what would otherwise be a dead truth—a hard seed—may find the suitable conditions for its nourishment and growth. There it is quickened. Every holy truth may find a home in the heart of man; the richest, ripest, most wholesome, most abundant fruit may be gathered in that Eden. 2. The heedful committal of the seed to the earth has its parallel in Christ's committal of his kingdom to the fruit-bearing heart. There it grows, "we know not how," though we know so much. There is but one true Sower to whom the field belongs, and who provided the one basket of seed. But many sow in his Name and by his direction—preachers, parents, teachers, writers, friends. But the truth once sown in the heart must be left to Heaven's own influence. Days and nights follow. Patient waiting is needed, for the growth of good principles is slow and the perfect fruitfulness not immediate. And the lesson of patience is silently hidden in the words of the parable. He who causes the seeds of the earth to swell and burst and die, and out of the hidden germ a new life to spring up, brings the truth to the remembrance, awakens dormant thought, stirs the indolent conscience, carries conviction deep within, whence springs faith, to be followed by all holiness. The growth retains its own distinctive character, being nevertheless affected by the nature of the soil—"the earth which beareth fruit of herself." 3. The progression of the spiritual life is as the growth of the field. The truth quickly works its way. The first signs are found in a slightly changed manner of life, as it submits to the restraining and guiding truth; the tint on the face of the field is slightly altered; a delicate tinge of spring green blades mingles with the russet-brown of the soil. All is immature and feeble, but beautiful, as the field in the first days of spring; and it is full of promise. A longer space follows ere the ear appears. It is the time of growth. The responsibility of the sower is transferred to the earth, save that he may guard

It from being trampled by the rude, rough hoof of stray cattle, or from being ploughed up wrongfully by careless hands. Now the sower must "sleep and rise night and day." He cannot hurry the growth. This is the time of trial, exposure, and danger. It is the needful time for Christian culture, for the gradual acquisition of strength and wisdom, and the slow building up of character. And what is true of the individual growth is true also of the great wide field which is the world, where all good, and alas! all evil, may grow, and whose prolonged history goes on slowly towards the great harvest. "The full corn in the ear" points to the matured Christian character, the trained, subdued, chastened spirit. Sunshine and shadow, calm and storm, darkness and light, have all passed over the field; all helpful, each in its own way, in promoting the growth, strength, and fruitfulness, alike in the less or the greater field; and all tending towards that moment "when the fruit is ripe." Then, and not until then, "he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come." So is it with every believer—every varied growth in the wide field; so is it with the entire history which tends towards that "harvest" which "is the end of the world."

Hence from this parable, which is one long teaching, we learn the wisdom and duty:

1. Of thankfully receiving the Word into our hearts.
2. Of faithfully cherishing it.
3. Of patiently waiting for its full fruits.—G.

Vers. 30—32.—*The parable of the mustard seed.* This parable stands related to the former. That pointed to the history of the growth of the seed; this points to the inherent vitality of the seed. That laid the emphasis on the field; this lays it on the seed. The simile is so exact that we are in danger of transgressing a needful canon in the interpretation of parables, and to treat it as a realism. *The parable illustrates the history of the kingdom of heaven in its outward manifestation*, especially the smallness of its beginning contrasted with the greatness of its results.

I. THE KINGDOM OF GOD FINDS ITS APPROPRIATE SYMBOL IN A SEED WITH ITS INHERENT, VITAL, SELF-EXPANDING FORCE. This is true, whether we interpret the kingdom of God to refer to its essential principle—the dominion of the Divine Spirit over the human spirit; or to its outward manifestation in the visible Church of God—the gospel developing itself in the heart and life of mankind; or even to its instrument—the Divine Word. Gathering these together as all comprised in the idea of the kingdom of God, we must see it to be truly represented by a seed—a living, inherently vital power. This parable leads us to think more particularly of the outward manifestation of the kingdom of God; and wherever we see it planted we sooner or later see signs of growth and extension. One of the first sentiments stirred in the breast of the newly converted is a desire for the conversion of others; and the first activities evoked from the new life are found in efforts to lead others to like blessing. Each believer becomes the germ of a Church; each is a self-propagating seed. From one may spring a thousand, nay, as many as the stars of heaven for multitude. So was it with the Church in the beginning—the little quickened seed in Jerusalem. So has it been in every age. To-day we joyfully witness the signs of this vitality on every hand.

II. A SECOND FEATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS THE EXTREME SMALLNESS OF ITS ORIGIN. Still thought of as an outward manifestation, how small was its beginning! How little a seed! Judging Christ's work by the greatness of its aims, how small were his means! What books did he write? What organization did he frame? What cities did he build? What armies did he raise? What did he? Estimated by outward signs—a mere nothing. A few women and fewer men gathered; no multitude, no Church, no forms of worship, no writings. No; no; nothing. What then? Just a living seed dropped into the warm heart. Not more than a human heart could treasure—not more than Matthew could remember. The record of a brief life, with its few words; its few noble deeds of sincerity, love, and self-denial; and its sad death and marvellous resurrection. All the kingdom of God in that one life, all the heavenly treasure in that one earthen vessel; all in a "mustard seed, . . . less than all the seeds that are upon earth." But it grew to be "a tree."

III. This the third feature of the parable: THE ULTIMATE EXTENSION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD. And the point of interest seems to be it grows beyond its probable limits, "greater than all the herbs;" yea, it "putteth out great branches, becometh a tree, so that the birds of the heaven" not only "lodge under the shadow" of it, but

"in the branches thereof." Its growth is beyond, far beyond, what might have been reasonably expected. So we see to-day; so will it be more and more seen. These parables Jesus spake unto the multitude "as they were able to hear;" and privately then, as he now does to them who care to know, "he expounded all things."—G.

Vers. 35—41.—*The stilling of the storm: the deliverance of the Church.* The miracles so far recorded were miracles of healing, and demonstrate the dominion of Christ in the realm of the human life—he is Lord of the human body. Now he declares his equal dominion in the realm of disturbed nature, "even the wind and the sea obey him." The Church has found two uses in the miracles of our Lord. 1. In an earlier age they were a sign to unbelievers, evidences of the authority of the Teacher, attestations to the truth of his message. Christ appealed to them: "The works that the Father hath given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. Though ye believe not me, believe the works." 2. In later times they have been found to be a treasure of spiritual teaching, a word of revelation and power to believers. Thus they form a part of the Church's inestimable possessions. The instruction divides itself into two branches: the positive knowledge which they convey—as in this, the lordship of the world's Redeemer over external nature; and the typical and more hidden spiritual lessons. The Church has ever seen herself represented in that ship. "The ark of Christ's Church" is a consecrated term, and in the sea she has beheld the wild, raging, unfriendly world. So the incident becomes typical: (1) of the Church's exposure in the world, as a bark on a stormy sea; (2) of the Church's true safety in the presence of Christ; (3) of the ever-present and final stilling of the rage of the world and the perfect deliverance of his own from all surrounding peril.

I. THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF THE LORD JESUS IS A HISTORY OF EXPOSURE TO DANGER. What perils have threatened the holy writings—that ark in which all the truth is held! At first but a few scattered recollections of men; Heaven's high treasures held in earthen vessels. Then written on a few flying leaves of parchment by tremulous human hands in uncertain human letters. Afterwards followed dangers from the errors of dim-sighted transcribers, from injudicious interpolators, from the destructive ravages of fire. Yet after the long ages it is probable we possess a more accurate transcript of the original documents than the Church ever possessed since the very early transcripts were penned. To what perils has the true Society of Jesus—the holy Catholic Church—been exposed in her very varying history! Scarcely had this barque left the shores ere the strong surf of Judaism threatened to overturn it. Then fitful winds of human wisdom—"the profane babblings and oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so called." Dangers have arisen from internal contentions—a mutinous crew; from unsteady hands at the helm, and clouded eyes upon the watch; from overlading with worldly goods, gold, raiment, precious stones; from sunken rocks of pride and worldly glory. False lights have threatened to wreck the vessel upon rugged and uncertain coasts, while black darkness has overcast the heavens, when "for many days neither sun nor stars have shone and no small tempest lay" on the exposed craft. Truly this Galilean boat, this "ark of Christ's Church," has been often in perilous seas. But with all she has not sunk. Christ has said, "Let us go over unto the other side." A wider view would lead us to think of the exposure of the whole spiritual interests of men. Though these have been exposed to dire destruction, they still survive, and faith, and hope, and love, and truth, and righteousness abound.

II. THE CHURCH'S SAFETY HAS EVER BEEN, IS NOW, AND EVER WILL BE, IN CHRIST. This no believer will doubt. To all human appearance *asleep*, he hastily responds to the cry of prayer, of fear, and desire. The Church to-day is as truly safe in the midst of her many dangers as in that night when the whole Church and the Lord thereof were in that one fishing-boat, when all seemed to be risked, and men accustomed to the sea cried, being fearful, "We perish." Up out of the evils of this stormy life will he lift his own by the miracles of his supremacy. His sweet, calm voice will yet be heard above "the raging of the sea and the tumult of the people," above strife and war and cruel hate, above ignorance, and sin, and sorrow, and pain. Even to evil he will say, "Peace, be still." So that unto him whom winds and seas obey shall be glory and honour from the quiet spirits of his whole Church for evermore.—G.

Vers. 1—20.—*The process of truth in the soul.* “Word” in the parable stands for truth in general. It is the Greek *logos*, which contains everything relating to ideas and the reception of them.

I. THE RELATION OF TRUTH TO THE SOUL. It is mysterious, because in it the secret of life lies. We know certain things about the seed; we know certain things about the soil; we know that their contact is necessary that germination and growth may take place. Sight, experience, teach us this. But the relation itself is unseen and defies the grasp of thought. Well may the poet say of the “flower in the crannied wall” that he has plucked and holds in his hand, could he know its mystery, he should know “man and God and all things.” Piety lacks root without reverence; and reverence is begotten of mystery, *i.e.* of the sense that God is present in every fact of life, in every act of thought.

II. THE RECEPTION OF TRUTH IN THE SOUL. The parable clearly teaches that the whole intelligence and will are closely concerned in this. 1. There must be *attention*. The frivolous listener lets the sound of instruction “go in at one ear and out at the other.” Pictures of life and duty, which need to be seized and fixed in conduct so soon as they arise in the inner chambers of imagery, melt away like dissolving views. 2. There must be *retention*. Memory depends on attention: “Therefore we ought to give earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time they should slip by us.” Memory is a talent of which some have more, some less; but in every case it may be increased. Truth does not strike all minds in the same way; the important thing is to seize the truth which *does* strike us, and which we know to be truth by the way in which it strikes us. If conscious of the frailty of our memory, let a few things be constantly brought before our thoughts. *Non multa, sed multum*. 3. There must be *simplicity of choice*. Truth is jealous, and admits no rival. We must be true to her, for she alone gives freedom. Passions, cares, excitements of the imagination—these cannot be avoided in our active life in the world. For a time they may overcloud our ideal, cause us to lose sight of our goal. But the cloud will lift again, and directness of purpose will dispel these mists and cause the weight of the μέμνηται βιωτική (see ‘Ecce Homo!’ p. 221) to fall. Christ sympathizes with our life-difficulties, but implies that we may overcome them.

III. THE PROGRESS OF TRUTH IN THE SOUL. 1. *It follows the analogy of plant-growth.* We can hardly think of spiritual growth under any other image. Herein the need of some knowledge of natural science to the theologian. There lie some of his best instructions and illustrations. It is the Divine counterpart in nature of the ideal truth of spirit. 2. *There is diversity in spiritual as in natural growth.* Here the corn only is used as an analogy. But we may generalize. The differences in *kind* as well as degree of produce are not less numerous than in the immense plant-world. The world of souls is as varied as a garden—as a tropical forest. ‘Tis a universe of variety. God spiritually unfolding himself in endless forms of beauty and of strength, delicacy and vigour. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” For the parable is in fact a sketch-picture of the ideal world—of God’s kingdom of the invisible and eternal. We are in this world to be acted upon by him, that we may react upon him in all the devout activities of a fruitful life.—J.

Vers. 21—25.—*The use of the spirit.* I. THE FACULTIES OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT COMPARED TO LIGHT. We may take any division of them we please: intellectual, emotional, volitional; head, heart, hand;—the comparison holds good. 1. Light is cheering, so is intellect; sound reasoning, bright fancy, lambent wit, genial humour, sound knowledge. 2. With light goes heat. The sound head is generally associated with the large heart. Carlyle said that a great heart was the foundation of talent. 3. Light promotes morality, purity, progress; dispels the thoughts and deeds of darkness. Great is the blessing of the presence and action of the man of high principle in the home, the Church, the court, the senate, the judgment seat. 4. It is revealing. The beauties of nature exist not for us in the darkness. Nor can we see the wonders of God in the spiritual or ideal world without the light shed by the genius of the scientific man, the moralist, the philosopher, and the poet.

II. FACULTIES GIVEN TO BE USED. 1. If not used they are hardly *possessed*. They dwindle and become enfeebled in disuse. “To him that hath shall be given,” etc. In

this lies the important differences between man and man. The seeming stupid becomes bright by patient friction with difficulty, while the idle clever man rusts and blunts his edge.

“If our virtues go not forth from us, ’tis all
As one as though we had them not.”

2. God is an exact creditor. He starts us in life with a certain fixed capital of energy; just such and such a sum or number of talents. The rest is our part. The increase may be indefinite, in this world and worlds to come. He “lends not the smallest scruple of his excellence, but, like a thrifty creditor, demands both thanks and use.” Let life be the grateful repayment of the spiritual loan. If we do not “pay our way” we shall suffer for it.

“Wouldst thou seal up the avenues of ill?
Pay every debt as if God wrote the bill.”

3. In the long run, success or failure, prosperity or ruin, is the reaction of our own deeds. We reap as we sow. A Nemesis presides over all our works. “If you serve, or fancy you serve, an ungrateful master, serve him the more. Put God in your debt. Every stroke shall be repaid. The longer the payment is withholden, the better for you; for compound interest on compound interest is the rate and usage of this exchequer.” “The benefit we receive must be rendered again, line for line, deed for deed, penny for penny, to somebody. Beware of too much good staying in your hand. It will fast corrupt and breed worms. Pay it away quickly in some sort.”—J.

Vers. 26—29.—*The beauty of growth.* I. THE SMALL BEGINNING. What smaller or more seemingly feeble than the seed—the thought—the word—the volition? Yet in the beginning lies the end, in the acorn the oak.

II. THE IMMENSE DIVINE POWER. We lie on the bosom of nature as the seed lies in the earth. For as winds blow and waters move and earth rests, God in his might and love bears up and onward the living soul. All things are ours to work our good.

III. THE SECRECY AND SLOWNESS OF THE PROCESS. God does the best for us while we sleep. The Greek artist represented Fortune driving cities into the net of the sleeping conqueror Timotheus. Cultivate a wise patience. Know the power of the word *Wait!*

“Think you of all the mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?”

“Ripeness is all.” ’Tis worth waiting a lifetime for the fruition of an hour. Each hour is a fruition of eternity to him who lives in God. And we may be reaping when we seem only to be sowing.—J.

Vers. 30—34.—*The power of ideas.* I. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS THE KINGDOM OF IDEAS. All forms of the true, holy, and good are included in this kingdom. Life would be intolerable, amidst the greatest physical comfort, without ideas. Our spirit is born to love and live among them. Novelty of ideas is the condition of change for the better in every life-department.

II. IDEAS ARE SELF-MULTIPLYING. Start a beautiful pattern in trade; it gives birth to a whole creation of beauty. Cast in a golden hour a seed of truth or love into the general mind; up springs a flower, whose seed will presently be in all gardens (see Tennyson’s poem). Do a noble deed, speak a word from the full voice of the heart; an infinity of echoes will awake; a thousand imitators will arise. Let us speak in these parables of nature to the many; and for the few let us analyze and elicit their wider meaning. For the truths of the seen are less than those of the unseen. Illustrations light up a truth not understood; but their value is transient. The truth escapes from this or that clothing into other forms.—J.

Vers. 35—41.—*Storm and calm.* I. STORMS BREAK UNEXPECTEDLY UPON US. The lake of Galilee was peculiarly exposed to them from the north; the wind rushed as

through a funnel down those gulleys and ravines. This was known to the sailors, yet the storm was unexpected. Life is the lake; change may come at any moment, we know; and yet it is the "unexpected which always happens."

II. PRESENCE OF MIND IS NEEDED. To know that the mind is our real place, and all that happens elsewhere is not our affair,—this makes us independent of change, calm amidst scenes of terror. Nature is for them. Divine reason subdues the wild forces of nature. Faith in that reason is what we need. It is the true and deepest source of "presence of mind."

III. THE ABSENCE OF CONFIDENCE AND COURAGE IS BLAMEWORTHY. "Why are you so fearful?" You may know at any time the worst. Fear is the reflection in our mind of some image of overwhelming power, threatening our existence. With Christ on board, our spiritual existence is safe. Perfect abandonment to duty, truth, and God alone, lifts above this anxiety.

"If my bark sinks,
'Tis to another sea."

J.

Vers. 1—20. Parallel passages: Matt. xiii. 1—23; Luke viii. 4—18.—*Parabolic teaching.* I. THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER. 1. *Benefit of acquaintance with Scripture topography.* To the right comprehension of Scripture acquaintance with Scripture topography is indispensable. This is easily obtainable at the present day from several books of travels now accessible to all. Much may be gained in this way even by those who have not had any opportunity of visiting Bible lands. 2. *Peculiarities in this parable.* Here several things are peculiar, and only such as are to be met with in the East. First, the sower went forth (ἐξῆλθεν) from his homestead, for his fields evidently lay at a considerable distance from his dwelling. In the next place, the different kinds of soil are represented in close proximity. Further, the seed is scattered on the highway as well as on the ordinary and proper ground. The produce likewise in one case appears unusually large. Now, on turning to Stanley's book on 'Palestine,' or to Thomson's 'The Land and the Book,' we get a glimpse at the state of things in the East, which proves all this to be clear, correct, and consistent. From those interesting records of Eastern travel, with their graphic sketches of Eastern scenes, we learn that the sower has to go forth frequently a distance of some miles from his home in order to deposit his seed in the ground. On reaching the corn-land, he finds it devoid of fences, a pathway passing through it, thorn bushes growing in clumps together, with rocks here and there peering through the surface of sparse and scanty soil, while not far off are patches of exceeding fertility; the produce at the same time amounting to the high figure of a hundredfold, but reckoned in the following peculiar fashion:—Of three bushels sown one is lost by the birds, particularly the crows; another third is destroyed by mice and insects, but out of the one remaining bushel one hundred bushels are reaped. 3. *Confirmatory facts.* Speaking of the verification of the parable with respect to the different kinds of ground, Thomson, in his entertaining manner, proceeds thus: "Now, here we have the whole four within a dozen rods of us. Our horses are actually trampling down some seeds which have fallen by the wayside, and larks and sparrows are busy picking them up. That man, with his mattock, is digging about places where the rock is too near the surface for the plough; and much that is sown there will wither away, because it has no deepness of earth. And not a few seeds have fallen among the *bellan*, and will be effectually choked by this most tangled of thorn bushes. But a large portion, after all, falls into really good ground, and four months hence will exhibit every variety of crop, up to the richest and heaviest." Stanley's account, though quite independent, is remarkably similar and confirmatory of the foregoing in all the main particulars. The following extract contains the substance of it:—Referring to the plain of Gennesaret, he says, "There was the undulating corn-field descending to the water's edge. There was the trodden pathway running through the midst of it, with no fence or hedge to prevent the seed from falling here and there on either side of it or upon it; itself hard with the constant tramp of horse and mule and human feet. There was the 'good,' rich soil, which distinguishes the whole of that plain and its neighbourhood. . . . There was the rocky ground of the hillside protruding here and there through the corn-fields. . . . There were the large bushes of thorn, the 'nabk,' that kind of which tradition says that the crown of thorns was

woven, springing up in the very midst of the waving wheat ;" while in a note he adds, "I observed that the same mixture of corn-field, pathway, rock, and thorn extended through the whole of this part of the shores of the lake." 4. *Naturalness of our Lord's imagery.* The comparisons employed by our Lord are every way appropriate, not only suitable to the comprehension and habitudes of the persons addressed, but springing naturally out of the circumstances in which he and they find themselves placed, or the scenery by which they are surrounded. His eye rests on a rich pasture-ground of Southern Palestine, where a flock of many sheep is grazing amid green herbage or reposing by still waters ; or perhaps he sees them following the shepherd, with whose kindly voice they are so familiar, as he goes before them, in Oriental fashion, and gently leads them along the hillside or down in the deep valley ; or they are returning to the shelter of the fold on the sunny slope, and passing through the wicket gate under the friendly shepherd's care ;—immediately and naturally the scene suggests the illustration, "He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. . . . I am the door : by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. . . . I am the good shepherd : the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold : them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice ; and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd." Again, among the many once vine-clad hills of Judah, he stands beside the steep side of the terraced hill that bears the vine ; or he is passing along the street of one of its towns or cities, and he sees the vine climbing up the wall or spreading its branches along the trellis-work beside the door of a dwelling, or standing by itself alone at the house-side ;—at once the thought is present to his mind and finds utterance by his lips, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away : and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Again, in Northern Palestine he gazes on the fertile plain of Gennesaret, with its luxuriant vegetation, its rich corn-ground carefully tilled if not highly cultivated, and waving in harvest-time with its heavy masses of ripened grain ;—and thence he draws his parables of the sower going forth to sow his precious seed and again returning laden, bearing his sheaves and rejoicing by the way ; of the tares ; and the secret growth of the seed ; perhaps also that of the mustard tree. When he surveyed the blue waters of the Sea of Galilee and contemplated its calm expanse, while its waves came gently rippling to the beach or slumbered in silence at his feet ; or when the hum of its busy industry sounded in his ears, and his attention was turned to the variety of vessels that ploughed its surface, and its numerous fishing craft ;—he thence derived the illustration, which is found embodied in the parable of the draw-net with its great length and extensive reach, gathering within its folds of every kind both bad and good—the valuable and the vile alike. Once more, when he gazed on the city of Capernaum, "his own city," so highly exalted in religious privilege, and the riches of its merchandise, and the resources of its commerce ;—the merchantman with his goodly pearls or with his carefully hoarded and cautiously hidden treasures was naturally suggested to his mind. 5. *Variety in the independent records.* In that chapter of parables, the thirteenth of St. Matthew's Gospel, no fewer than seven parables are recorded ; in the parallel passage of St. Mark four are recorded ; and by St. Luke in the corresponding section only two. Of the seven parables in St. Matthew's record, two are also recorded by St. Mark, with two additional ; of the four in St. Mark's record, two are recorded by St. Luke. But all three relate the parable of the sower contained in this chapter. Accordingly, the seven parables of the chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel referred to are—the sower, the tares, the mustard seed, the leaven, the hidden treasure, the pearl, and the draw-net ; of these parables, the first teaches the production or founding of the kingdom ; the second and seventh, the persons commingling in it or its mixture ; the third and fourth, its progress ; and the fifth and sixth, its preciousness. In the corresponding section of St. Mark are the four parables—the sower, the mustard seed, the secret growth of the seed, and the candle set on a candlestick, if we may properly call it a parable ; in the corresponding portion of St. Luke we find the parable of the sower and that of the candle on a candlestick.

II. COLLATION OF THE THREE RECORDS. 1. *A complete whole.* By comparing the three gospel narratives and piecing them together, as it were, we obtain a complete whole. It is often of much importance and always of great interest thus to consolidate the narrative by a comparison, if not a combination, of the text. 2. *The seed by the*

wayside. In the narrative of the seed sown by the wayside, St. Matthew and St. Mark both tell us of the fowls, or winged creatures, of the heaven devouring it; while St. Luke states in addition the fact that it was *troddeu down*. In the interpretation which our Lord gives of this same portion of the parable, all three agree in informing us that the Word that was sown in the hearers' hearts is taken away by the devil, or Satan, or the wicked one, as they severally designate him; while St. Matthew gives us the additional information that this occurs in the case of persons hearing the Word and *not understanding* it, and that he *snatcheth* it away; and St. Luke subjoins the object for which it is thus taken away, "lest they should *believe* and be *saved*." 3. *The seed on stony ground.* In the narrative of the seed sown on stony ground, or on the *rock* according to St. Luke, all three tell us that it withered away; but St. Matthew and St. Mark add that, before withering, it was *scorched*, after the sun had risen, from *want of root*, and that owing to *lack of soil*; while St. Luke states simply that the withering was due to *lack of moisture*. In the explanation, again, all three tell us that those sown on stony ground receive the word with joy, but that they have no root, and that they endure or believe for a while; St. Matthew and St. Mark further state that when "affliction or persecution ariseth because of the Word, immediately they are *offended*," or stumble; but St. Luke speaks of such a season more generally as a *time of trial*, and intimates that they then *stand aloof*, or *apostatize* altogether. 4. *The seed among thorns.* In the narrative of that sown among thorns, all three inform us that the thorns choked it; but St. Luke further informs us that the thorns grew up *simultaneously* with it; and St. Mark adds, what in these circumstances might be expected, that it yielded no fruit. In the explanation, all three acquaint us with the fact that it is choked and becomes unfruitful; they trace the unfruitfulness to its being choked; St. Luke says, by cares and riches and the *pleasures of this life*, as men go on their way in it; St. Mark uses a more comprehensive expression than the "pleasures of this life," which St. Matthew altogether *omits*, namely, "the *lusts of other things*;" while both St. Matthew and St. Mark qualify riches by an expressive term, adding "the *deceitfulness of riches*." 5. *The seed sown on good ground.* In the narrative of the seed sown on good ground, we are informed by all three that it bore fruit, but on a graduated scale—a hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold, according to St. Matthew; but in *reverse order* according to St. Mark; while St. Luke merely specifies the *maximum* at a hundredfold, as if he had in view Gen. xxvi. 12, "Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold, and the Lord blessed him." Here again, in the explanation, all three coincide in the matter of fruitfulness. St. Matthew tells that "they *understand* the Word," St. Mark that "they *receive* it," St. Luke that "having heard it in an *honest and good heart*, they *keep* it, and bring forth fruit with *perseverance*." 6. *A gradation.* Thus the seed by the wayside did not even spring up at all; that on the rock did indeed spring up, but withered; that among thorns sprang up and grew, but being choked yielded no fruit; only that on good ground sprang up, grew, and brought forth fruit to perfection.

III. INTERPRETATION OF THE SEED. 1. *The seed is the Word of God.* The seed is that Word of which, as has been well said, "Truth is the substance, salvation the end, and God the author." The seed is that Scripture all of which "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The signature to a will or other document does not need to be rewritten or repeated from time to time; nor does the seal to such an instrument need to be restamped once and again; so with those *miracles* which were the sign manual of God to the truth of his Word, and the seal affixed to it in attestation of its Divine authorship. Once wrought, as those miracles were, according to the record of the most authentic history in the world—and no facts of history were ever more fully or more clearly testified, or more carefully and critically scrutinized—they remain to the present hour the signature of the Divine Author; and not only that, but his seal to the reality of the Divine origin of Scripture. Thus Heaven has stamped approval on the document with its own seal and signature; while these proofs, authenticated by the most unexceptionable witnesses, remain permanent and powerful as ever. 2. *Proof from prophecy.* But view Scripture again in the light of prophecy. The Messianic prophecies, for example, were delivered by different persons, in different places, at different times, under different circumstances, and on different occasions; yet these prophecies,

when carefully and correctly put together, portray unmistakably Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah—the Christ of God. Suppose a painting executed in a somewhat similar way—the head painted in Berlin, the hands in Boston, the arms in Paris, the trunk in St. Petersburg, the legs in Vienna, and the feet in Rome; suppose these different parts all brought to London and placed together, each in its proper position, and that, when thus put together, they present the exact picture of Christ which is seen in the famous “Descent from the Cross” as painted by Rembrandt, or by Rubens, or even by Jouvenet: what conclusion would we, or should we, come to from such a phenomenon? Would it not be that some great master painter had presided over and prepared the whole, guiding in some way every hand, directing every brush, and inspiring every head so that one of the finest specimens of pictorial art was thus wondrously brought into existence? In like manner, let the Old Testament prophets who foresaw and foretold the sufferings of Christ as well as the glory that should follow—let Moses and Malachi, David and Daniel, Isaiah and Micah, Jeremiah and Zechariah, be brought together round the cross of Calvary, and let their pictures and prophecies meet together there, and they will unite in perfect harmony, and present the exact picture of him whose hands and whose feet were pierced with nails, who “was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities,” and on whom “the chastisement of our peace was laid,” and in whose riven side was opened that cleansing “fountain for sin and for uncleanness.” Though the portions contributed, the prophets themselves, the periods at which they lived, the plans they pursued, the predictions they delivered, were all different, yet one Spirit testified in them, one God inspired them, one unseen but almighty hand superintended them all; and the picture, brought together from so many different quarters and composed of so many different parts, is one. 3. *Practical proof.* But let us take a still plainer and more practical test. See yon venerable patriarch whose locks are silvered with years; he resides in a remote hamlet, he dwells in a humble cottage. Observe with what reverence he takes down the ancestral Bible, and with what grace he reads its sacred page at the hour of morning or evening worship. He has never read, perhaps never heard of, any of the great writers on the evidences—Butler, or Paley, or Lardner, or Leslie, or Leland, or Watson; and yet, if you ask him how he knows that volume, which he reads so dutifully and devoutly, to be the Word of God, he will at once and unhesitatingly reply that he knows it must be the Word of God, for he has felt its power to be Divine, bringing, as it has done, pardon to his soul, peace to his conscience, light to his feet and a lamp to his path, joy to his heart, and the “sure and certain hope” of eternal life and immortal glory to his never-dying spirit. Wherever we find a man of that stamp, whether he lives in town or country, in city or village; whether he is the peer that owns a castle or the peasant that is only a tenant in a cottage; whether he be a native of merry England, or broad Scotland, or green Ireland, or gay France, or proud Spain, or the German Fatherland, or classic Italy; whatever be his caste, or calling, or country, or clime, that man, having God’s truth in his heart, the grace of God in his soul, and the Spirit of God to guide his feet in the path of peace—that man, whoever he is, or in whatever rank he is found, is a living witness that the seed, of which the Saviour speaks in this parable, is the Word of God and the abiding seed of holiness, for “being born of God he doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” 4. *The seed is the Word of the kingdom.* The seed is also called, and so explained to be, the Word of the kingdom. The King of the country to which we travel has issued this Word as a Guide-book to every pilgrim who is travelling to the kingdom of glory. It is the Law of him who is anointed to be a King for ever—who is enthroned as King upon the holy hill of Zion, yea, who is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. It is the Word of that kingdom which at its first beginnings is as a little stone hewn out of the mountain without hands, but which afterwards becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth. It is the Law of that King whose kingdom is to be without bounds, and whose reign is to be without end. Of his kingdom it is the Statute-book. From that kingdom it comes and to that kingdom it conducts, translating the sinner out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, out of the kingdom of sin into the kingdom of grace, out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God. And no sooner has any traveller set his face and turned his feet from the City of Destruction towards the city of the great King, than, like Bunyan’s pilgrim, he is observed with this Book in his hand, and at

every progressive step in his pilgrimage his eye is on the Book, and thus he reads and walks, and walks and reads, ever reading as he goes. Like David, "his delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in that Law he meditates day and night." In reference to this Law it was said of Israel, "What nation is there so great that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this Law which I have set before you this day?" We, with Law and Gospel in our hands, are surely bound to be grateful, and to feel—

"How greatly blessed the people are
The joyful sound that know!"

5. *Our duty in relation to the Word of the kingdom.* The statutes of an earthly kingdom are carefully studied as well as frequently perused. How much more ought the Word of the kingdom, that is, the statutes of the kingdom of heaven, to be daily and diligently read and consulted! If the King of heaven condescends to be at pains to teach us his statutes and his judgments, surely the least that we, who are "of the earth, earthy"—creatures of a day, worms of the dust, should do, is to be at pains to learn those statutes of the Lord that are right, "rejoicing the heart." Again, where the word of a king is there is power, consequently the Word of him who is King of kings and Lord of lords should come home to our hearts, not in word only, "but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." When the word or law of an earthly king is transgressed, such transgression is usually visited with pains and penalties proportionate to the transgression. Can we reasonably expect, then, that the transgressors of Heaven's Law shall escape with impunity? The King who rules in Zion will, we are assured, rule also in the midst of his enemies. If we refuse to touch the sceptre of his mercy, or if we reject the Word of his grace, then assuredly we shall be broken with a rod of iron and dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel. The Word of the kingdom is the Word of the King of glory; if we follow its directions they will conduct us on the way to glory. It is the Word of him whose kingdom is not of this world; if we walk according to its instructions, then shall our conversation, or citizenship, even now be in heaven. 6. *This seed is absolutely necessary for salvation.* It is, as we have seen, the Word of God and the Word of the kingdom, but it is still the seed; and what the seed is in the natural world, the Word of God, or of the kingdom, is in the spiritual world. Without seed there can be no vegetation—neither root nor fruit, neither bud nor blossom, neither leaf nor flower, neither stalk nor plant. The soil may be as rich as that of the primeval forest when it is cleared, or as that of the virgin prairie when it is for the first time opened by the ploughshare; there may be gentle showers and genial sunshine, reviving heat and refreshing dews. The seasons may be most propitious; they may follow each other with successive and suitable blessings—the purifying winds of winter, the freshness of spring, the sultriness of summer, the maturity of autumn; but notwithstanding all this, if the seed be wanting, there cannot be a single stalk of grain nor plant of any kind—neither "grass for the cattle nor herb for the service of man." So spiritually, the Word of God is seed of regenerating power; for are we born again? Then it is "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Thus the Word of God is seed—the seed of grace in this world, and of glory in the next; the seed of holiness in time, and of heaven through eternity. 7. *The seed needs quickening.* We have seen that without the seed of God's Word there is neither grace nor glory, neither holiness nor heaven; and therefore as much as justifies the inference that all that is good and gracious, all that is really noble and truly Christian, every grace and every good work,—all spring from the seed of the Word. In the economy of nature, the vigorous stem, and green leafage, and lovely blossom, and abundant fruit are all owing to the seed, and could not possibly exist without it; so in the economy of grace, strong faith, lively hope, and ever-advancing holiness,—all spring out of the seed which is the Word of God. But granting all this, the seed only contains the material of life—it is the means of life; but it is dependent on the quickening, vivifying, life-giving Spirit of God. By his Spirit he fructifies the seed; by his Spirit he vivifies his Word. The Word of God, the Son of God, and the Spirit of God must all go together in the salvation of every human soul. The Son of God brings salvation, the Word of God reveals it, and the Spirit of God applies it. 8. *There is vitality in every verse as well as in the whole volume.* Even where the Bible

is not found collectively and in all its component parts, fragments of it may exist in the shape of single books, or chapters, or verses. And wherever it is thus met with even in dispersed portions, there is seed, there is the germ of life, and, by the blessing of God and the operation of his Spirit, there will in due time be the full development of life and fruitfulness. While it is a blessed privilege to possess the whole of God's Word, and sufficient means of understanding it, and abundant material for its enforcement; still persons not so privileged, but having in possession some small portion of God's Word, are not without the means of safety and salvation. Paragraphs of the Bible, verses of the Bible, sentiments of the Bible, are often blended with the religious compositions of human authors; yet still they retain their vitality, and only want the Spirit of God to quicken them into living power.

IV. THE WAYSIDE HEARERS. 1. *Nature of the wayside.* By this we may understand a highway, or byway, or bridle-way, or ordinary footpath; but whether the way be broad or narrow, whether it be a well-constructed road or merely a beaten pad, whether it be a public road or pathway, two notions attach to it. We connect with it, first, the idea of a *passage*, along which people walk, or ride, or drive, or along which traffic is conveyed. But a second idea attached to it, and one which is the consequence of the first, is that of *hardness*, because of the constant resort along it. Both ideas characterize the hearts of wayside hearers. Just as the highway is that along which people travel on foot, or horseback, or in vehicles of whatever kind, and that too along which their goods are conveyed and their commerce carried on—along which, in fact, their merchandise is transported; so the heart of the wayside hearer is a highway for the *passage of worldly thoughts*. Such thoughts are constantly passing to and fro along it. Temporal things make it their thoroughfare; unchecked, unhindered, unimpeded, and uninterrupted, they pass and repass. Earthly, or sensual and sinful, objects are constantly found on the highway of that carnal heart. Passion and pride, avarice and ambition, luxury and lust are ever traversing that highway or the byways that diverge from it. Memories of the past, anticipations of the future, present reflections on worldly things, earthly joys or sorrows, worldly cares and anxieties, schemes of wealth and thoughts of indulgence, or hopes of worldly aggrandizement,—all find free passage along the wayside hearer's heart. No foot, however unhallowed, is forbidden to enter there. Now, these hearers come to the house of God and seem to hear his Word: "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them. . . . And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." With this free and constant passage of thousands of earthly, temporal, worldly, and sinful thoughts along the open thoroughfare of the wayside hearer's heart there is small space for thoughts of God. They come "to hear of heaven and learn the way," but their heart is preoccupied, and their thoughts engaged with other objects. Besides, from this constant traffic along it, the heart becomes *hard* as the wayside, and like the common highway. When thoughts of what is good or gracious do enter, they pass over it, going out as they came in. They never settle on it or sink into it. Any good impressions or gracious influences are merely transient. 2. *The wayside hearers understand it not.* They hear the Word, but they understand it not. How could they? Understanding requires attention, but worldly thoughts engross the attention that should be given to thoughts of God. Not only so, the heart has become so hard by the constant traffic upon it that such thoughts, when they do enter, cannot penetrate the surface so as to find lodgment in the understanding. What with the crowding together and crushing along of worldly thoughts, and the consequent hardness of heart, the understanding remains untouched. Instead of minds enlightened by the Spirit of God, such hearers come with hearts hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and like a common highway; and so any serious notions that do force an entrance are lost amid the host of other thoughts, and lie on the hard surface. Any truths or facts not duly attended to cannot be properly understood; when only partially, or imperfectly, or perhaps not at all understood, they cannot be retained in the memory. So the wayside hearer neither takes heed to the Word nor keeps hold of it, and therefore gets no benefit from it. But another circumstance increases the culpability of the hearer and claims our notice. 3. *It is trodden down.* Many a precious seed of gospel truth has been thus treated. Many a time have the

truths of God's Word been trodden down. Many an assurance of Christ's ability and readiness "to save to the uttermost" has been trodden down. Many an offer of grace and salvation has been trodden down. Many an "exceeding great and precious promise" by which the hearer might be made partaker of a Divine nature has been trodden down. Many a Scripture picturing the joys of heaven, inviting and even urging us to make those joys our own, has been trodden down. Many a faithful warning of the sinner to forsake his ways and flee from present wrath and eternal ruin has been trodden down. Thus the Word of God has been despised and despite done to the Spirit of grace. The pure precepts of that Word as well as its precious promises, its earnest entreaties as well as its solemn exhortations, its faithful reproofs as well as its friendly remonstrances, its gracious invitations as well as its many warnings, have all been trodden down, and so treated with carelessness, indifference, and even contempt. 4. *Satan snatches it away.* "The fowls of the air came and devoured it up." Here again we should notice the verisimilitude of our Lord's representation. "In the countless birds of all kinds—aquatic fowls by the lake-side, partridges and pigeons hovering, as on the Nile-bank, over the rich plain of Gennesaret, we may still see," says Stanley, "the 'birds of the air' which 'came and devoured the seed by the wayside,' or which took refuge in the spreading branches of the mustard tree." Again he observes, "The flocks of birds in the neighbourhood of Gennesaret have been already observed. Their number, their beauty, their contrast with the busy stir of sowing and reaping and putting into barns visible in the plains below (whether of Hattin or Gennesaret), must have always courted observation." Never did a bird of the air rush with greater swiftness on its prey than Satan rushes to take away the Word of God as it lies unheeded and despised—trodden down, in fact, on the sinner's heart. Never did the birds that in such multitudes frequent the lake and plain of Gennesaret, whether pigeons, or partridges, or aquatic fowls, hasten with greater eagerness to pick up the seeds let fall by the sower on the pathway running through the corn-land in the plain of Gennesaret, than Satan hurries to take away the seed of truth out of the wayside hearer's heart. The wayside was not meant for cultivation nor intended to be sown; so there are hearers who come to hear the Word from custom, or fashion, or from conformity to a respectable observance, or for sake of appearance, or perhaps from a slight twitching of conscience, but not out of a sense of duty, or feeling of privilege, or any earnest desire to get good from it or profit by it. When they do come, their minds detach themselves, as it were, from their bodies and wander miles away; their thoughts wander on the mountains of vanity, or are absorbed in their worldly plans, or prospects, or purposes. Thus the seed lies on the beaten pathway, and is trodden down. Satan is "the prince of the power of the air," and multiplies himself in his emissaries, here represented by fowls, or winged creatures (*πτερυγὰς*), of the air. He turns away their thoughts from the truth that is being proclaimed and engrosses them with some worldly object; he amuses them, it may be, with some peculiarity of the preacher, or engages their attention with some article of a neighbour's dress; he prejudices their minds against the truth, or preoccupies them with thoughts widely different from those that should be suggested by the subject in hand; he may rob them of the seed by an after-sermon critic, or by the sarcasm of some worthless witting, or the sneer of a sceptically inclined friend. He has thousands of little birds of the air to carry away any thoughts of God, of the soul, of sin, of salvation, of heaven, of hell, of death, of judgment, of eternity, that might lie as seeds of truth on the heart. 5. *The immediateness of his arrival.* St. Mark draws attention to this point by the word *εὐθέως*, which occurs so often in his Gospel; but much the same thing is implied by the word which St. Matthew employs to represent Satan's method of taking away the seed. It is not *αὐρῇ*, equivalent to "taketh it away," used by both the other evangelists who record the parable; but *ἀπρὸς*, equivalent to "snatcheth it away" in hot haste, and in the eagerness of his desire to prevent any possibility, however remote, of its growth. This is a very remarkable feature in the narrative. Was it not enough that, from the continuous stream of other thoughts passing through the mind, and the myriad multitude of such, the seed had been neglected? Was it not enough that it was let lie on the surface of a heart that had contracted a sort of highway hardness? Was it not enough at least that it was trodden underfoot, trampled on, and despised? Strange that all this was not sufficient for Satan's purpose! But Satan knows too well the living energy of the

Divine Word; and, however neglected or jostled aside, however trodden down or trampled on it may be, however hard and impervious that wayside hearer's heart may be,—Satan, fully alive to the vitality of the seed of Divine truth, apprehends danger from its presence to his own sovereignty over his subjects. If he allowed the seed some time to lie on the heart it might, after all, recover from the trampling and root itself downward, and in the end bear fruit upward. He therefore comes immediately. And though he came immediately, still the seed had been already trodden down; and we therefore infer that the seed had no sooner fallen on the heart than it was instantly trodden down. 6. *Satan's object in all this.* This object is plainly stated in the words, "lest they should believe and be saved," or, as the Revised Version renders them, "that they may not believe and be saved." Here we have the whole plan of salvation in the briefest form; here we have the system of Divine grace for saving the souls of men. Here, too, we have the subject, the object, the instrument, and the result. The subject is every one on whose heart the seed of Divine truth is sown; the object to be accepted by faith is that truth; that faith, again, is the instrument; while salvation is the grand result. The object offered for our belief is the Word of God; the means by which we embrace that Word is faith; and the final and blessed end is salvation. Reader, this Word is now presented to you, and even pressed on your acceptance; if you prefer remaining in ignorance of it, or refuse to believe it, or neglect to apply it, and so fail to feel its saving efficacy, and obey, and enjoy it; then do you judge yourself unworthy of everlasting life, reject the offer of mercy, and put away from you the means—the only means of salvation. If when the truth of God, with its sanctifying and saving influence, is sown on your heart, you allow Satan to snatch it away, or, what amounts to the same thing, to occupy your mind with other topics, or divert your attention from it, or perhaps provoke your hostility against it, then will the end which should be the salvation of your soul remain unattained!

V. PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. We learn from all this the great sin of carelessness, heedlessness, and thoughtlessness, or rather thinking of other things, when the Word of God is being read or preached. 2. We learn the necessity of careful preparation for Divine ordinances. If we would hear the Word of God with profit, we must supplicate the Spirit of God to prepare our hearts to receive the Word, and to enlighten our minds to understand it, and to bring it home to our souls in demonstration and power. 3. We learn the importance of withdrawal from worldly thoughts as well as worldly business, of spending the morning of the sabbath in religious exercises and hallowed engagements, of avoiding idle gossip and all trifling conversation, and also of watchfulness against vain thoughts and wandering thoughts and sinful thoughts when in the house of God, so that Satan may neither hinder the work of God in, nor snatch the Word of God out of, our hearts. 4. Three processes are thus indispensable—breaking up the fallow ground by previous preparation, covering the seed sown by subsequent meditation and faithful pleading for the dew of Divine grace to water the seed sown, as well as taking earnest heed that we do not let it slip.

VI. THE STONY-GROUND HEARERS. 1. *Their shallowness.* The first characteristic of such is their shallowness. This is better expressed by *rocky* (*πετρώδες*), than stony ground. The first class of hearers had no receptivity in consequence of their heart being so hard, and the traffic along its thoroughfare so continuous. The seed falling on its surface lay there, was instantly trodden down, and immediately taken away by the evil one himself or some of his numerous emissaries. Now, this second class of hearers is so far superior to the former that they possess receptivity, but only to a limited extent. The surface of this soil is soft, it is true, but shallow. A soil may be stony in the proper sense; the stones may be small and loose; they may be tolerably close together or considerably apart. In either case the plant makes way in the interspaces, and roots itself where there is sufficient depth of earth. The present case is different. The ground is in the strict sense rocky; the rock—the limestone rock which prevails so extensively in Palestine—reaches the surface and comes fully into view, or is only covered and concealed from the eye by a sparse and shallow sprinkling of earth. Seed sown on such soil soon springs up, quickened into vegetation and warmed into life by the heat of an Eastern clime; and all the more so as the plant, when impeded in its development downward, would, by curious plant-instinct, the more rapidly propagate itself upward. But the very heat that helps the rapid springing of the

seed upward out of that thin, shallow soil, soon becomes hurtful because of that very shallowness of soil, where the root has no room for healthy development, and finds no moisture to invigorate its growth and counteract the excess of heat. Soon as the plant has sprung up and the sun has risen upon it, it is scorched. The sun's heat, so beneficial to a strongly rooted plant, is thus most prejudicial to that of which the root is not sufficiently developed. The whole is a correct representation of those shallow, impulsive creatures who at once fall in with any current excitement, or are carried away by some shallow sensationalism. 2. *Immediate and joyful reception of the Word.* This is the first particular which our Lord, in his exposition of this portion of the parable, specifies. Those who hear the Word in this way are in advance of that large portion of the population, sometimes called the lapsed masses, who never enter the house of God, nor wait at the posts of wisdom's doors to hear what God the Lord will say to their souls. They are also in advance of those who do indeed frequent the house of God, but who, like the wayside hearers, from carelessness, heedlessness, indifference, inattention, and the indulgence of vain, wandering, and sinful thoughts, are entirely irreceptive, never admitting the Word into their understanding or minds at all. They are in advance of those too who, though they attend the public worship of God, do so only as a matter of form, and regard it as a piece of decent drudgery, to which the force of public opinion, or compliance with the wishes of friends, or a notion of respectability, obliges them to submit. The persons referred to hear the Word with a large amount of satisfaction, and so far they are considerably ahead of multitudes of mankind and of many of their neighbours; yet they fail miserably at the end, and fall short of heaven. They receive it *anon*, at once, and without hesitancy or delay; but they are somewhat precipitate in their reception of it; they do not take time to "mark, learn, and inwardly digest" it. They receive it readily, neither "proving all things" nor "holding fast that which is good." They receive it with pleasure, but without profit. They receive it as an intellectual treat or literary enjoyment, but there its influence is at an end. They receive it with mental approbation, but, though gratified with it, they are neither guided nor governed by it. They receive it with eagerness as the good Word of God, and it is sweet to their taste; but it does not check their beloved lusts and besetting sins, nor change their evil habits and ungodly lives. Or, if it do produce any change, that change is merely transient. Their goodness is like the morning cloud, now careering it in the vault of heaven, and for a short time visible as a rain-cloud, then vanishing without the promised shower—a moment seen, then gone for ever; or like the early dew-drops scattered as pearls upon the grass, and sparkling in the morning sun, but brushed away by the foot of the passing traveller before it reaches the earth to moisten its surface or fructify its soil. But how or why is this? How is it possible that persons may receive the Word with gravity and solemnity, with frequency and apparent fervour, with eagerness and gladness, and yet without any beneficial effect or abiding result? Because they do not receive it with faith, and therefore "the Word does not profit, not being mixed with faith in them that hear it." 3. *They want root.* The secret of unsuccess here is want of root; "they have no root in themselves," and so they "endure but for a time," or last only for a season (*πρόκαιροι*). The seed falling on the surface soon penetrates the thin layer of soil, but when it has pierced through that shallow covering, it comes upon the hard, impenetrable rock. It can go no further; it can neither go round that stratum of rock nor enter it. So with the seed of the Divine Word when sown on rocky hearts. It has no real root in them, and so it dies away and is soon gone; it has no root in the judgment, and so there can be no fixed principles of life or action; it has no root in the understanding, and so there are no clear conceptions of truth nor correct apprehensions of duty; it has no root in the will, and so the will remains without proper restraint and right direction; it has no root in the affections, and so no habits of goodness are properly formed or of permanent continuance; it has no root in the conscience, and so no regulative force is exercised over that vicegerent of God in the heart of man; it has no root in the memory, and, as a matter of course, it is either consigned to oblivion or is only remembered as the sound of a pleasant song. The tender plant cannot penetrate the hard rock nor root itself in the unyielding limestone; it is no wonder, then, that the rootless plant cannot in any case exist for long, much less resist for any considerable time the scorching rays of the midday sun. There is (1) no *fixity* in the root and

no firmness in the stem. See the languishing aspect of that lovely floweret which has been uprooted from the genial soil of its parent earth; how soon it droops and dies! Compare it with the plant, or shrub, or tree fast rooted in the earth. Look at yon old oak tree deep moored in the rifted rock; it is subjected to every blast; it is assailed by every storm, fretted by every gust of heaven, and exposed to every wind that blows. The wind has bent it, but never broken it; the storm has shaken it, but could never uproot it; the tempest assailed it, but it has withstood the shock. Centuries have rolled over its aged top and widespread branches, but time has only left it sturdier than ever—deeper rooted than before. “Woodman, spare that tree,” for the strength of wind and the stress of weather have proved its deep-rooted stability—firm as the rock in which it is rooted, and immovable as the everlasting hill of which that rock is a part. May the Word of the eternal God take root in our hearts, and, when so rooted, may it gradually attain a greater depth of soil; and may the Spirit of the living God enable us, by meditation, prayer, self-examination, and closer communion with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to maintain to the end such deep-rooted strength and Christian stability! But the root serves another purpose, for not only does it give fixity and firmness to the plant, it is (2) the means of conveying *nourishment* to the plant; it is the channel of communication between the seed and the soil. Plants need nourishment as well as animals, and accordingly they are furnished with the apparatus necessary for receiving such nourishment. At the extremity of each fibre of a root there is a spongiole, or small sponge, to suck up nutriment from the soil. The substances required for the nourishment of plants must be in a state of solution—dissolved in many times their own bulk of water; otherwise they could not pass through the exceedingly minute apertures or pores of the spongioles. Now, it is obvious that there are two ways in which we may make a plant to perish—either by withdrawing the moisture from the soil, and the inorganic substances by which the plant is fed cannot be made available; or by destroying the root and those vessels through which the small particles of matter in solution are absorbed by the plant. In the former case the nourishment designed to sustain life is altogether withheld, or, if present, cannot be utilized; in the latter case that very nourishment tends to accelerate disorganization, for when moisture remains stagnant in the sponges they are soon saturated, and disease and putrefaction ensue. Now, in the case which the parable supposes, both the nourishment is wanting, and the means of receiving it are absent—both moisture and root are deficient, or rather entirely lacking. Where then, or how, can the plant draw the supply of nourishment which it requires? Now, the channel of communication, as well as the means of connection, between the spiritual seed and the spiritual soil—the Divine Word and the human heart—is faith. When, therefore, that which is the medium of communication and means of life is absent, how or whence can spiritual life, not to speak of growth or health, be maintained? The seed and the soil have no means of contact; the root of faith that should bring them into vital union is deficient; and so there is no nourishment, no development of vitality—in a word, no spiritual life.

4. *A temporary semblance of life.* “For a while they believe,” or for a *season* they endure. We have seen a young twig sprout seemingly verdant and vigorous from the lifeless trunk; and so for a while a plant may appear to have life, while it is virtually dead. For a while it may seem even to flourish, where the root is dying or already dead, and where the source of life and vigour, as well as the means of communicating it, are wanting. Just so is it in things spiritual: men may for a while have a *name* to live, while yet they are dead; the blade of profession may be green, while the root of *grace* may be withered or wanting; men may profess much and seem to practise what they profess, while that profession is hollow and that practice heartless; there may be a beautiful blossom and a fair flower, and yet no fruit ever come to maturity or even come forth at all. Without the power of life in the root there is no vital principle, no genuine practice, and therefore no final perseverance. But to put the case more practically, there may be both conviction and confession of sin, and yet no conversion. Felix trembled when St. Paul “reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come;” but yet to St. Paul, after his powerful sowing of the heavenly seed, the answer was, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” There may be a commendable disposition to hear God’s Word and so receive the seed; there may be many good resolutions formed, and yet the result may be the same as in

the case of Agrippa, when he said to St. Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian;" still the almost Christian, as the old divines used quaintly yet truly to say, is only almost saved. Men may not only wait on the ordinances of religion with satisfaction, listen to the gospel with pleasure, and receive the preached Word with gratification and gladness, but also reform much in life and conduct, just as it is written of Herod, that he "feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him he did many things, and heard him gladly;" and yet the end may be no better than that of that wicked and unhappy monarch. 5. *The testing-time.* A time of temptation or trial cometh—"tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word." Here we have the genus and the species very clearly set before us; the trial in general and its specific kinds. The *trial* is of a hostile kind (*πειρασμῶν*), and the two sorts of it are distinctly stated, namely, personal affliction within, and persecution without. The affliction or painful *pressure* is such as comes upon us 'in connection with our own individual circumstances, and may affect us in soul, body, or estate. The *persecution* is that which assails us from without. But why is this? Why does this persecution arise? "Because of the Word." The world hates God's Word, because the holy doctrines of that Word are opposed to and condemn the unholy principles of the world, and because the pure precepts of that Word are contrary to and rebuke the unrighteous practices of the world. The carnal mind hates the Word, for that Word exposes and reprobates its sinful and shocking enmity to God. The flesh hates the Word, because that Word denounces "those fleshly lusts that war against the soul," and commands men to "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts." The sinner hates the Word, for the principles of that Word are the means which the Spirit employs to reprove him, as well as "convince him of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." Every unrenewed heart and every unregenerate soul hates the Word, because the Law of God, which it contains, is holy and just and good—exceeding "spiritual," and its "commandments are exceeding broad." Satan hates the Word, because it is "the sword of the Spirit" by which he is vanquished, by which souls are rescued from his grasp, and the destroyer deprived of his prey. Hell hates the Word, for where that Word is unknown, or unread, or unpractised, hell enlarges itself beyond measure. Hence it is that tribulation and persecution arise because of the Word. 6. *Their failure in the day of trial.* "Immediately they are offended"—scandalized; that is to say, a stumbling-block is laid in their way, and they fall over it. After a season of special privileges and gracious influences, a time of trial may be expected to come, in order to prove the sincerity of professors and the genuineness of their religion. After such a period a testing-time may be looked for, and then it is seen who in reality have the root of the matter in them. Persecution is like the heat of the sun's rays, and this indeed is the figure which our Lord himself employs in this parable. If the plant be well rooted, the heat of the sun exercises a genial influence on it, promoting its growth and bringing it to maturity. Once the Word of God has struck deep root and become firmly rooted in our hearts, the clouds of adversity may roll over us, the tempest of persecution rage around us, and the storms of temptation beat at our feet; yet the firmness of our attitude shall defy the storm, and the fixity of our root shall be strengthened instead of shaken. The tree rooted in the rock may be uprooted, the grey rock of centuries may itself be upheaved by the earthquake; the oaks of Bashan may be uprooted, and the cedars of Lebanon may be rent and riven by the lightning of heaven; the mountains may shake with the swelling of the waters, and the solid earth itself be removed from its deep foundations; yet, with the seed of truth fast rooted in the heart, and the heart itself grounded in love, the believer stands unmoved, unterrified, and unhurt. He stands like the spectator on the high summit of a lofty mountain that seems to pierce the clouds; he hears the hoarse and dreadful roarings of the storm far below him; he sees the broad and vivid flashes of the lightning glare beneath him; and listens to the "live thunder as it leaps far along from peak to peak among the rattling crags." The eminence he occupies elevates him above the storm; the firmness of his position secures him against its fury; the storms of an angry world may rage, but he is rooted. How different it is with plants where there is no deepness or depth of earth, where there is lack of moisture, and where the root is deficient or defective! The sun's heat scorches them, and they wither. Thus it ever is: the Word of God is either "the savour of life unto life," or "of death unto death;" Christ crucified is

to "the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." So is it with trial, whether tribulation or persecution; while it only confirms the faithful and leaves them more firmly rooted, it becomes an occasion of stumbling and even of final apostasy to the unfaithful who have no root in themselves. The trials, that help the believer onward to an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory," are such a hindrance in the way of the barren professor that he is offended and falls away. "The same fire," says Augustine, "turns straw into ashes, and takes away the dross from gold." 7. *Final apostasy*. "They fall away." How sad this statement! "They fall away," that is finally. Such is the closing scene! Many a one runs well for a time, but something hinders him, and then he stumbles and finally falls! Many a one, who bade fair to be the Lord's in the great "day when he maketh up his jewels," thus falls away and sinks into apostasy! Many a one, who appeared to be so running that he might obtain the incorruptible crown in company with the pure and holy, falls away from these high hopes and glorious prospects, and perishes for ever! Alas! how dreadful the thought of having a reward so rich in prospect, a diadem so bright in anticipation, an inheritance so incorruptible to look forward to, and yet of finally and for ever falling away and forfeiting all!

VII. PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. Warned by all this, we are surely called on solemnly to consider *how* we hear, and carefully examine our motives as well as our manner of hearing. 2. We should ever have in recollection the Scripture admonition in reference to such matters, which says, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." 3. We must not be content with a certain change of conduct and conversation; this may last for a time, but, unless the heart be changed, there is no permanence in the change. Unless there is the root of faith, there can never be the real fruit of righteousness. 4. We are warned to expect trial. "All who will live godly in Christ Jesus" must be prepared for it. But, instead of being discouraged thereby or deterred from the path of duty, we must rather rejoice as the apostle directs, saying, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations [or trials];" and again, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." 5. We must beware of being turned aside from the path of duty, or from the study of God's Word, or from prayer, or from the worship of the sanctuary, or from religious service of any kind, either by sneers or taunts, or by unkindness or even persecution on the part of the ungodly. By doing so we prove ourselves of those here represented by the rocky ground. 6. What need we have earnestly to seek the aid of the Holy Spirit to preserve us from an evil and hard heart of unbelief, in which the seed of God's Word can neither take root nor grow!

VIII. THE THORNY GROUND. 1. *Superiority to the two preceding*. "Some fell among thorns." Now, we have, in the descriptions of the several kinds of ground, an ascending climax. In the first the seed lies on the surface, and never enters the soil at all, and by such are understood the *unenlightened* or unintelligent hearers. In the next the seed finds its way into the soil, but that soil is so shallow and so sparse—a mere thin coating on a rock—that the progress of the root downward is soon prevented by the hard, opposing, impenetrable rock: by these conditions are represented the *superficial* hearers or readers of God's Word. We now enter on a third stage upward. The seed, instead of lying on the surface, or remaining rootless in the layer of mould thinly spread upon a rock, has good soil to sustain it, and takes root therein; but the soil, though of itself good enough and deep enough, suffers from preoccupation; thorns, or roots of thorns, have found a place in it: by this description *worldly* hearers are meant. 2. *The growth of the thorns*. We are not to understand full-grown thorns, but thorn roots that had been left in the ground through defective tillage. Proper culture would have completely eradicated them. On the contrary, these thorns grew up along with the sprouting seed (*συνφύεται*), and quite choked it. The thorns overtopped the young plant that sprang from the good seed; in this way they overshadowed it, shutting out at the same time both light and air; while a still worse consequence ensued from their roots absorbing the nourishment furnished by the soil, and withdrawing it from the tender plant. The inevitable result was, by robbing it of the strengthening nutriment afforded by the richness of the soil and moisture,

to reduce it to a thing of sickly, stunted growth. 3. *The signification of the thorns.* Our Lord, in his interpretation of this part of the parable, shows us that by the thorns we are to understand cares and riches, according to the first Gospel; while a third element is added by St. Luke, namely, "*the pleasures of life*;" and by St. Mark under the still more general expression of "*the lusts of other things.*" All classes of society are comprehended here; all sides of human life are here exhibited. The poor and rich here, as elsewhere, meet together. The third class, embracing such as are devoted to the pleasures of life, or who are concerned about lustings after other things, may be regarded either as a distinct class, or may be reckoned as a sub-class under either the poor or rich; especially the latter, inasmuch as the poor have often as keen a desire for pleasure, and as much zeal in pleasure, as the rich, but without equal means of gratification. 4. *How thorny cares choke the seed of God's Word.* The cares referred to are distracting cares—anxieties pulling a man like so many cords in different directions. When such harassing cares come into conflict with thoughts about the things of God, the man in whose breast such a struggle is going on must needs be a double-minded man, in the sense of his heart being divided between God and the world. The cares here mentioned are more particularly such as distress the poor. With many the struggle for daily bread is a severe one—the battle a hard one. To provide food and raiment, a suitable place of abode, and proper education for the members of a household, with requisite preparation for their business in life or special life-work, whatever it is to be, demands a certain amount of careful attention. Nor is this anywhere forbidden in the Word of God; nay, it is commanded. We are required to "provide things honest in the sight of all men;" to be "not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;" while it is added that "if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Besides such domestic duties, there are social duties, and personal individual duties, which we are bound to discharge as individuals and as members of society, as well as those which belong to us in our family relations. For the faithful and efficient discharge of such duties care and thought must be employed, time and pains expended. 5. *Two extremes to be avoided.* But, while carelessness about duties of the kind specified is sinful, there is another and opposite extreme, which our Lord deemed it necessary to rebuke by two most beautiful comparisons—the fowls of the air and the flowers of the field; the birds which in such multitudes frequented the lake and plain of Gennesaret, and the flowers which in such variety and surpassing loveliness clothed with spring beauty the hillsides of Galilee. It is our heavenly Father who clothes the one and feeds the other, thus caring for both. How much more will he take care of his children by redemption and adoption as well as by creation! "If," says an old divine, in his own plain and pithy way, "our heavenly Father feeds his birds, he will never starve his babes." God will have us cast our care upon him; he will have us feel convinced that he careth for us; he will have us to be "careful"—that is, anxiously careful—"for nothing, but in everything"—little as well as great, momentous or minute—"by prayer and supplication . . . make our requests known unto God." In this way, avoiding either extreme—that of criminal carelessness on the one hand, and that of corroding carefulness or over-anxiety on the other, and ever by prayer rolling our burden over on the Lord, we get rid of those thorny cares that choke and strangle the growth of the good seed in our hearts. Worldly objects do claim a due share of attention, worldly duties must not be neglected; but heavenly subjects are of paramount importance, and heavenly interests bear the same ratio to earthly that heaven itself does to earth, or eternity to time. Thorns served for fences, and in some places separated the fields in Palestine, as we infer from Micah (vii. 4), where the prophet uses the comparison of "a thorn hedge." They were useful, therefore, in their own way and in their own place for fences in fields, but most baneful when left to grow up in fields of corn, or grain, or other crops. So with worldly cares; they have their place. Of course, by worldly cares we do not mean those anxieties which are strictly forbidden under all circumstances, but only that amount of attention that is required for the right discharge of the worldly duties that devolve upon us. Anything beyond this is injurious to our best and highest interests. Uneasy, anxious cares, like the thorns among the growing grain, choke the Divine Word and strangle the springing plant of grace. Such cares, when yielded to or indulged in, interfere unduly with those

thoughts and feelings and affections that are claimed, and justly claimed, by the lessons of God's Word. Things present take the place of things everlasting; anxieties about our worldly affairs crush out altogether, or leave little room for, spiritual concerns. The thorns of this parable are represented as encroaching on the good seed, and usurping the place which of right belongs to the useful plant; so these cares of the present world, if allowed, are sure to usurp the place that belongs to the world to come. The thorns took away from the seed-root, and drew to themselves the nourishment of the rich soil; so the concerns of a passing and perishing world take away our thoughts from God and heaven and eternity. The things that are seen and temporal withdraw our attention from things unseen and eternal. The body and its wants take the place of the soul and its necessities. Exertions and energies that should be devoted to higher and spiritual objects are squandered on the trifles of earth and sense. Under such conditions and in such circumstances the seed of the Word sown in the heart necessarily becomes unfruitful. The soil may be excellent, the seed may be carefully sown, the Word faithfully ministered, it may, moreover, take root and grow; but the thorns deprive it of its proper nourishment, its growth is obstructed, the plant becomes weak and sickly; without strength or vigour it can yield no fruit. It may have stem, and leaf, and bud, and blossom, and growth to a certain extent, but it brings no fruit to perfection or maturity (*οὐ τελεσφορῶσι*). In such hearers of the Word there is no fruit of the Spirit, no Christian grace, no works of faith, or deeds of charity, or labour of love in any direction; "it becometh unfruitful." 6. *Another class of these mental thorns.* With the cares of this world our Lord classes riches, as another division of the thorns of this parable. There is nothing sinful in riches when honestly acquired or justly inherited, and when at the same time they are rightly used. We read of the father of the faithful himself that he was "rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold." Two circumstances make the possession of riches to be perilous. The circumstances referred to are the love of riches and the abuse of riches. "The love of money," we read, "is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows;" or, according to the Revised Version, "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows;" and hence it is that they occupy the thoughts and engross the affections to the exclusion of the lessons of inspired truth—the precepts of the Law and the promises of the gospel. They pierce and pain, moreover, like the pricking of thorns. What sorrow as well as solicitude they occasion! Men set their minds to work, and perplex themselves with plans to obtain them, and minds thus preoccupied have no room left for better objects and holier pursuits; men torture themselves most unwarrantably in order to increase them and augment their store; men are distressed with restless schemes in order to retain secure possession of them; men, again, are so in love with them that they cannot bear to part with them, or share them with others for the noblest purposes—religious, educational, or charitable, nor even for the means of profiting their own souls. When the love of riches thus dominates the heart, and when such plans and projects regulate its thoughts and rule its affections, no wonder that such bushy and prickly thorns choke out (*ἀπεννίσταν*), or crushing together suffocate (*συμπνίγουσι*) and stifle the seeds or plants in their growth. 7. *"The deceitfulness of riches."* Both St. Matthew and St. Mark mention this characteristic of riches. How often does it occur that men rise up early, sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness with the hope of becoming rich; but the wealth they are in quest of, like some phantom form, eludes their grasp. Wealth, just as the meteor of the marsh, leads them till it leaves them in the quagmire, deluded, deceived, disappointed. They die neither rich in worldly goods, nor rich toward God. Again, men struggle long and hard for many years, and at length succeed in amassing wealth (*λοῦτρος*, from the root *λει* entering into the verb "to fill," the noun "multitude," and the word "wealth," in Greek), and in scraping together much of this world's goods; but scarce has their object been attained, their hopes realized, when, lo! through some untoward event, such as a conflagration, the breaking of a bank, or a robbery, their riches "make to themselves wings and fly away;" and thus they are deceived by a fluctuating, vanishing possession, for the attainment of which they have strained every power of mind and body, to the entire neglect of the soul and spiritual things. Once more, we can well

suppose the case of men succeeding in the race for riches, and retaining in security the fruits of their labour. But by this time they are no longer young; desire has failed, the power of enjoyment has ceased; the advance of age, with its accompanying decay and decrepitude, kept pace with the accumulation of wealth; and now in the end, after years of toil, they have no relish for the enjoyments they had anticipated; they have experienced "the deceitfulness of riches," and, what is worse, their heart is now hard, their conscience seared, the seed of truth has been so long stifled, and its instructions so long suffocated by the crowding thoughts of wealth. Further, riches deceive by their promises. They promise happiness, but instead of happiness they often bring miserable apprehensions; they promise peace of mind, but they often prove the chief disturbers of that peace; they promise contentment, but the craving for more produces restlessness and dissatisfaction; they promise to lighten the burdens of life, but they frequently superadd a crushing load of care to all its other burdens; they promise relief from care, but it is as true now as in the poet's day, that "black care mounts behind the knight." The seed of the Word may be sown on the rich soil of a young, warm heart, it may strike root deeply downward, it may develop a tender stem and green leaf upward, it may struggle for light and air, but in vain! These thorns rob the root of nourishment, and shut out the genial sunlight and healthy atmosphere from the top; and though there may be foliage, there is no fruitage. If, then, poverty distresses with its cares and distracts by its anxieties, riches may divert the mind by their abundance and deceive by their promises; in either case, the Word may be unfruitful, the life barren, heaven missed, salvation lost, and the soul ruined. 8. *Other perils to profitable hearing.* When we reflect on the dangers to our spiritual life and growth attending both poverty and riches, we may well say with the wise man, "Give me neither poverty nor riches," or give me grace to bear myself discreetly and devoutly in either. But if the poor man is in danger from his poverty, and the rich man in danger because of his wealth, what of the man of pleasure? The word *Bios* differs from *ζωή* both in the classics and in the Scriptures; but the difference thus existing is reversed, so that in Scripture the latter denotes the higher kind of life, and is the word of moral meaning involving moral distinction, while the former is more closely connected with natural life, or that life which we have in common with other animals. Accordingly, we read of "the pride of life" (*βιωῦ*), "the affairs of life," and here "the pleasures of life," with the same word in each. "The pleasures of life," or of *this* life—our versions supplying the pronoun—may be the pleasures of sense and sin, such as the apostle enumerates under works of the flesh, when he says, in his Epistle to the Galatians (v. 19), "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, . . . drunkenness, revellings, and such like." Or the pleasures here referred to may be the less gross and more fashionable pleasures which minister to pride, to pomp, to luxury, and to ambition. These desires about the remaining or other things may refer to gay clothing, costly furniture, rich equipages, stately mansions, works of art, broad acres, wide domains, popular applause, worldly advancement, and whatever else may be comprehended under "the lust of the eye and the pride of life." Even lawful desires inordinately pursued, proper objects too eagerly sought after, right employments and occupations too keenly followed, even natural affections carried to excess,—all these, when they are allowed to interfere with or draw away the attention from everlasting verities, the lessons of Scripture, and the concerns of the soul, and are not restrained by the grace of God, become spiritual thorns. They choke the seed, distract and distress the mind, and in the end "make a death-bed difficult." We have read somewhere that when the famous French cardinal Mazarin drew near his end, he caused himself to be dressed, shaved, rouged, and enamelled. Then he had himself rolled in an easy-chair through his picture-gallery, exclaiming at times as he went along, "See that Correggio, this Venus of Titian, that incomparable Caracci! Must I quit them all? Farewell, beloved ones! None can know how my heart bleeds to leave you." He was next wheeled into the promenade, where the feeble hands of the old sinner were actually held up while he joined in a game of cards! And so, it is added, he continued till the papal nuncio came to give him plenary indulgence.

IX. PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. The first lesson here that presents itself to our attention may be expressed in that exhortation of the Apostle John, "Love not the world,

neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 2. We are warned so as to beware of the cruel disappointment of going on successfully for a time, and then coming short at the last; of being, in other words, an almost Christian, and so only coming in view of but not reaching salvation. Here the surface was not hard, as in the case of the wayside, nor was the soil shallow, as in the case of the stony ground; on the contrary, there was a soft surface to admit the seed, there was soil neither shallow nor stony to retain it; and yet the seed, though well and deeply rooted, was stifled at the top and suffocated at the root, so that it never reached maturity. 3. With seeming progress there may be real retrogression. In the case of the wayside it is trodden down at once, never penetrating even the surface before Satan snatches it away; in the stony ground the seed finds lodgment in the soil, springs up speedily, but for want of root or depth of earth to maintain the root, it is scorched and withers away; in the thorny ground it enters the surface, roots itself in the soil, springs up and grows, but after all it remains barren and fruitless. The last state, in one point of view, is worse than the preceding, and that, again, than the first; because more progress has been made by the seed among the thorns than by that on the rocky ground, and more by that, again, than by the seed cast on the wayside; and thus to go so far as to take root and grow, and then fall short at last, is more disappointing than the case of the seed which, though it enters the soil, never takes root, and only endures for a time; and still more than that which never penetrates the surface at all. 4. It has been remarked, that the first corresponds to the carelessness of childhood, the second to the shallowness of youth, and the third to the worldliness of age; the first also implying inattention, the second impulsiveness or ardour, and the third indulgent selfishness.

X. THE GOOD GROUND. 1. *Its character.* The chief characteristic of the good ground is its *productiveness*; while our Lord, in his explanation, indicates several other interesting particulars. The good ground represents an honest and good heart. Absolute goodness is out of the question, for "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and so the question comes to be—Is it the comparative goodness of the natural heart, or is it the heart of the believer, in reference to whom we read, that "the preparations of the heart in man are from the Lord"? That there are differences in unregenerate men and in the condition of their hearts is, we think, unquestionable. It is so with individuals: as Nathanael, of whom, when coming to Jesus according to Philip's direction, the Saviour himself said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile;" or as Cornelius, "a devout man, and one that feared God, with all his house;" or as the Ethiopian eunuch, who, while he was returning in his chariot, read carefully and pondered closely "the prophet Esaias." It was so with the members of the Berean community, who were "more noble than they of Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind." Thus even by nature some are more candid, honest, and upright than others; more earnest and desirous of knowing, as well as more ready to receive, the truth. Such natural differences, as well as those made by grace, are due to God, who alone makes men to differ. If the reference is to believers, the meaning is perfectly plain. The heart of such becomes "honest and good" in the highest human sense, when God, by his Holy Spirit, renews the heart and sanctifies the life, having united the soul by faith to the Saviour. Hearts thus quickened and purified are in a condition to receive, and do receive, the Word in simplicity and godly sincerity. Thus receiving it they grow thereby, being nourished and strengthened, and built up in their most holy faith. 2. *The reception of the Word by such.* Three terms are employed in this regard. St. Mark says, *παράθενται*, they receive it, with a feeling of inward satisfaction, it may be, or even delight. The stony-ground hearers are represented by the same evangelist and by St. Matthew as receiving it (*λαμβάνουσι*), and by St. Luke (*δέχονται*), with joy. The joy with which such hearers received it was a sudden impulse, which soon ceased—a quick, joyous emotion, which played on the surface without stirring to any great extent the depths of the heart. But the reception accorded to it by those having an honest and good heart is accompanied by a deep, steady, abiding interest. The usage of this word in the LXX. seems to imply a *cordial* reception; thus, in Isa. xlii. 1 we read, "Israel is my chosen, my soul has accepted (*προσδέξατο*) him;" and in Prov. iii. 12 it is written, "For whom the Lord loves he rebukes, and scourges every son whom he receives (*παράδεται*)." But whether this shade of meaning be attributable to the context or

inherent in the word, certain it is that such hearers receive the Word not wearily nor listlessly, nor as a formal duty, but as a matter of privilege, and in order to be instructed and edified thereby, and that their souls may be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. But, secondly, such hearers *understand* (*οὐκ ἔχουσιν*) the Word. The interest we feel in any truth or fact helps us greatly in its right comprehension; once our interest is fully awakened our attention will be excited; we shall examine its bearings more thoughtfully. It is thus especially with the Word of God: we shall study it more carefully, as well as more prayerfully; while the Holy Spirit, promised to them that ask him, will guide us into all truth, even "the truth as it is in Jesus." A third element in this reception of the Word is the retention of it (*κατέχουσιν*, used by St. Luke): they *keep it*. Having received the truth in the love of it, and having mingled it with faith, it becomes the ingrafted Word—ingrafted as a fruitful shoot in the wild unfruitful stock, or implanted in them, at all events, incorporated with their very being. As a natural and necessary consequence, they hold it fast, so that Satan cannot snatch it away, nor vain thoughts crush it down, nor worldly concerns stifle it, nor any evil influence destroy it. It becomes the subject of regular, constant, daily meditation; and so it gets linked with the thoughts and feelings and affections, while it is reduced to practice in the life. The individual so receiving it is "not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the Word," and so blessed in the deed. This corresponds exactly with the apostle's statement (1 Cor. xv. 2), "By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory [*κατέχετε*, literally, *hold fast*, as here] what I preached unto you." 3. *Fruitfulness*. Fruit is borne in varying proportion, according to the talents bestowed and the surrounding circumstances. This fruit is borne *in patience*, that is, enduringly and perseveringly, and to the end; and not only the seed itself, but the fruit—each grain in every ear in turn becoming seed multiplies itself.

XI. PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. *Right way of receiving the Word*. There must be the exercise of attention, understanding, and memory; as far as possible the attention must be lively and earnest, the understanding active and practical, and the memory retentive. 2. *The fruitfulness*. The fruit, though it varies in quantity, is a uniform product, evidencing the root of the matter, and ministering at once glory to God and grace to man.—J. J. G.

Vers. 21—25. Parallel passage: Luke viii. 16—18. — *Light and illumination*. I. TEMPORARY OBSCURATION. The heathens in their mysteries had esoteric doctrines only made known to the initiated, and not designed to be revealed at any time to the uninitiated. The obscuration in their case was permanent. Our Lord, at a particular period of his ministry and for a special purpose, veiled his teaching in parable. But this obscuration was only meant to continue for a time. Our Lord guards against the notion that the doctrines thus propounded were designed for perpetual concealment, or for revelation only to a select few. Accordingly he asks *whether at all* (*μήτις*) a lamp (*λύχνος*) is brought into an apartment in order to be secreted or to be set on a lamp-stand. The lamp is not brought, is it, to be put under a bushel (rather, a peck-measure, equivalent to the Roman *modius*) or under a bed, and not to be set on a lamp-stand? The light in a dwelling may be concealed for some necessary purpose and for some short time, but this is contrary to its regular and proper use. So our Lord here implies that the light of his teaching may be partially concealed by parable, and confined for a time to a few immediate followers, but shall be manifested, and is meant to be manifested, all the more afterwards. The matter is expressed in two ways—first as a prediction, and secondly as a purpose. As a prediction, "There is nothing hid, that shall not be manifested;" or, more literally, *There is not anything hid, that (or whatsoever) may not be revealed*. As a purpose, "Neither was anything kept secret, but that it should come abroad;" rather, *Neither did anything become secret, but that it might come into open view*. Like a lamp placed under some piece of domestic furniture for a short space and for some sufficient reason, the light of our Lord's doctrine was placed under the veil of parable or other obscuring medium for a time. But this position was never meant to be permanent—nay, the purpose was the very opposite; that is, to promote rather than prevent the future splendour and the further outshining of that bright and beautiful light.

II. RELATION OF LEARNING TO TEACHING. Our Lord's maxims never undergo a change of meaning, but their application necessarily varies with the context. After enunciating

one of these maxims, viz. "If any man have ears to ear, let him hear," as a safeguard against possible error, and to prevent a not unlikely misconception, he proceeds to state another principle of his teaching, and another purpose to be accomplished. This principle was that the measure of attention given by the disciple to his Master would be rewarded with a proportionate measure of improvement; that in proportion to the desire of instruction and the use made of it by the disciple would be the benefit bestowed by the teacher. Again, the purpose was that the instructions thus received should be utilized for the advantage of others, so that the more the disciples profited as learners, so much the more they themselves would be able to impart to others, as preachers of the gospel and as teachers of the truth. Further, ulterior and higher attainments are promised to him who makes a right use of present attainments; while he "who has not," that is to say, who has not for ready use, and who does not make available his present or previous attainments, shall forfeit even what he has, or fancies he has. We thus learn that spiritual attainments and spiritual knowledge are never exactly at a standstill. They are either increasing by proper application and improvement, or decreasing by misuse and diminishing by neglect.—J. J. G.

Vers. 26—29.—*Spiritual vegetation or secret growth.* I. RELATION TO THE IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING PARABLE. This parable, which may very appropriately be called "the secret growth," is recorded by St. Mark alone. It is peculiar to his Gospel. Its relation to the parable of the sower, which precedes it, is somewhat of the following kind:—The former parable describes the *soil*, this one, the *seed*; the former the *quality* of the soil, and this the *vitality* of the seed.

II. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. "The kingdom of heaven" is an expression of frequent occurrence in Scripture. Thus we read, "The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation," that is, "outward show," as the margin expresses it; also, "The kingdom of heaven is within you," or "among you," as the margin again has it. The meaning of this important expression is sufficiently plain to every reader of the New Testament, and does not, at least in its present connection, require any lengthened explanation. It denotes the reign of Heaven's principles in the heart of man, the spread of Heaven's principles among the families of man, and the glory of Heaven's principles as exhibited in all their plenitude and in all their power in that new heaven and new earth in which dwelleth righteousness. It may be more briefly summed up as the kingdom of grace in the heart, of peace in the family, and of glory through all the world. In Luther's 'Smaller Catechism,' on that petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come," it is asked, "How does this take place?" and the answer is, "When our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, that through his grace we believe his Holy Word, and live a godly life, here in time and yonder in eternity."

III. QUALITY OF THE SEED. The seed here, as in the former parable, is the Word of God; thus we read, at the fourteenth verse of this chapter, "The sower soweth the Word:" so also in that other Scripture, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Husbandmen are particularly careful about the quality of the seed which they cast into the furrows of the field, and very properly so, for the prospect of the harvest depends so much thereon. They reject the seed that is mixed, or unhealthy, or dead; otherwise the result would be most disastrous. Exactly so should it be with the Word of God. Here is a duty incumbent both on those that speak and on those that hear that Word; it behoves them both to see well to it that it is in truth the Word of God which they speak and hear. It must be the Word of God—nothing less, and nothing else; the Word of God in its purity, the Word of God without any mixture, whether of human error or human passion, or doubtful disputation, or unsettling speculation, or tradition of men, or doctrines of men, or philosophy and vain deceit. That Word, too, must be faithfully spoken, not handled deceitfully; for we are not to speak as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts; the whole counsel of God must be declared, and no part kept back; its force, too, must not be weakened, or its meaning explained away. Thus, "the truth as it is in Jesus" must be exhibited faithfully and fully, plainly and openly, just as the apostle says, "But as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." The danger of the contrary course is very forcibly pointed out in a remarkable Scripture (1 Cor. iiii. 12), where the apostle, after stating the true and only foundation to be Jesus

Christ, proceeds to say, "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble," that is, either doctrines more or less sound, or practice more or less consistent with profession, "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. . . . If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

IV. ADAPTATION OF THE SEED TO THE SOIL. In natural husbandry men are at pains to get seed suited to the soil. Every kind of seed does not suit every kind of soil; seed suitable for one kind may not be suitable for another. There is need, therefore, of selection and adaptation. There must be proper discrimination and judicious distribution. So with the seed of the Word; there is enough for all, and something for each, but it must be duly and discreetly apportioned. This is the direction of Scripture itself, for we are told therein that there are little children, young men, and fathers in Christ, and each is to get his portion of meat in due season; and, again, milk is intended for babes, and strong meat for them that are of mature age. Accordingly, the careless are to be aroused, the unawakened are to be stirred up, the indifferent to be alarmed; the ignorant, again, are to be instructed, the timid to be encouraged, and the presumptuous to be rebuked; the tempted are to be fortified against temptation, the weak are to be strengthened, and the sorrowful to be consoled in their time of trouble; such as have backslidden, or have been overtaken in a fault, are to be restored in the spirit of meekness; saints are to be edified, believers built up in their holy faith; the lukewarm are to be brought back to their first love, and the graces of all quickened. For these various purposes there is enough in the treasury of God's Word, and out of that treasury are to be brought forth things both new and old.

V. THE PART WHICH BELONGS TO HUMAN AGENCY. Man's part is to sow the seed. This is his plain duty, this is his palpable concern, and his practical part of the business. He has not to make the seed, or manufacture the seed, or meddle in any way with the production of the seed; this were a task far above his ability and beyond his power. The seed is ready to his hand, and provided for his use. All he has to do, and all that is required of him, is to put the seed into the soil, and deposit it properly in the furrows—sowing, of course, as far as may be, the seed to the soil and to the sort of previous preparation made for it. We insist on the indispensable necessity of casting the seed into the furrow of the field, and likewise of sowing the seed of truth in the human heart; we affirm, moreover, the need of diligence in accomplishing this part of the operation, which is man's work and man's duty; we assert the absolute requirement of human instrumentality in this part either of natural or spiritual husbandry. The passage we are considering sets this duty clearly before us in the words, "As if a man should cast seed into the ground."

VI. THE NECESSITY FOR DIVINE INFLUENCE. There must be Divine influence as well as human agency; for in ver. 27 we read that the husbandman, after sowing the seed, may sleep by night and rise by day, while the seed springs up and grows he knows not how. Here, in the first place, we must take note of the vitality of the seed: it buds and lengthens (*βλαστάνη καὶ μηκύνηται*). God gave it this vital energy at the first, and so wonderfully powerful is this energy, that the seed which had lain three thousand years in the hand of the mummy will, when deposited in the earth under the ordinary conditions, sprout, spring up, and grow. We have seen that the deposition of the seed in the ground is necessary for any produce, but it must be added that for the development of the seed itself another distinct and indeed a Divine influence is required. Man can only go a certain length either in the department of nature or the sphere of grace. "Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but it is God that giveth the increase." When the seed has been committed to the earth in the most careful and skilful manner, the husbandman must wait for the fertilizing shower to make the seed grow and fructify. So in the spiritual sphere; not only has the seed of truth to be sown in the heart, and the lessons of God's Word to be deposited in the soul—and all this may be effected by human agency—but the influence of the Holy Spirit of God must be added. If the Word of God be the seed, as we are assured it is, then the Spirit of God is the rain-shower, the descent of which on the heart, or rather on the seed sown therein, is indispensably required for germination and fructification, or whatever else may be included under spiritual growth. Thus two distinct agencies must come together, unite, and blend in this great and important as well as mysterious process of spiritual

vegetation. There must be the Word of God—that is the seed; there must be the Spirit of God—that is the shower. Without the seed and the shower, without the Word and the Spirit, there can be no spiritual vegetation. The soil may be good, the seed both good and suitable; but the dews of heavenly grace—the influences of the Divine Spirit—cannot be dispensed with. Again, the influences of the Spirit may be vouchsafed at the proper season, and in sufficient abundance; but if the seed of truth, if the lessons of the Divine Word, have not been sown in the heart, there is no germination, no quickening. However favourable the conditions of growth may otherwise be, there can be no growth, for the material is wanting. There is no seed, and so no germ of life, and consequently no life. The presence of both is absolutely and indispensably necessary. There are two elements of growth in the natural world—the seed and the shower; the deposition of the former in the soil belongs to man's department of work, the descent of the latter is God's good gift. The one acts upon the other, while the united operation results in healthy vegetation. The seed supplies the material, the shower is the fructifying agency; the shower gives efficacy to the seed, the seed expands by the combined action of the sun and shower. In spiritual husbandry the seed is the Word, the shower represents the Spirit; the Word has life, but the Spirit is required to develop it. Without the Spirit the Word would remain inert, by the Spirit it is made productive; the Word is the germ of spiritual life, the Spirit unfolds and quickens it; their mutual action issues in the happiest results.

VII. THE BOND OF UNION BETWEEN THE TWO AGENCIES, DIVINE AND HUMAN. The absence of either agency would end in disaster. Nothing can supply the place of the seed, neither the soil itself nor the stones imbedded in it. Where there are no seeds the showers of heaven may fall in abundance, the sunshine of heaven may be bright and beautiful, but neither, in the absence of the seed, would be of any avail. Contemplate in the season of harvest a field of golden grain; the stalks are strong and vigorous; the ear is filled with kindly fruit, and bending under the weight; the whole is white unto the harvest. Let this be the case not in one field, but in all; not in one district, but in many; not in one part of the country, but in every part where the land is arable and under cultivation; and yet not one particle of the plenty thus supposed sprang up without seed having been previously put into the earth. Among all the multitudinous stems that constitute that rich, luxuriant crop that waves in the autumn wind, and covers with such abundance the face of the earth in the time of harvest, not one is found that grew without a root, and not a root that grew without a seed. And just so it is with the seed of truth rooted in the heart, and producing the harvest of grace in the life of man. But, as we have already intimated, the fructifying energy of the Divine Spirit, whether it acts by the dew, or shower, or sunshine, or all combined, is equally important, and indeed absolutely necessary in producing the manifold blessings of the spiritual harvest. What, then, is the link that brings these two agencies together—the seed which man sows in the soil, and the shower or other influence which God sends down from the sky? What means must be used to procure for the seed, when sown in the human heart, the quickening and refreshing power of the Divine Spirit? The only means available to man is the power of prayer, and prayer is a power as well in the domain of the temporal as of the spiritual. No doubt man has done his all when he has properly deposited suitable seed in fertile soil; but, though he cannot actually and of himself go further or do more, there remains a duty, the proper performance of which may carry the work much further, and set other and mightier energies in operation; for "prayer moves the hand that moves the world." Once upon a time, long ago, in the land of Israel, drought and dearth prevailed; "the prophet prayed, . . . and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." So when, in answer to believing prayer, God bestows his Spirit, the seed of truth germinates in the heart, and yields the fruits of the Spirit in the life.

VIII. THE FRUITFUL EARTH AND THE FAITHFUL HUSBANDMAN. "The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself." God, in his wise and powerful organization of our earth, gave it this power. In obedience to his original command, and in virtue of power originally imparted, the earth brings forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit after his kind—the three great divisions of the vegetable kingdom. The productive earth still retains the power which God at first impressed on it, and to God it is still indebted for its productiveness, as we read, "He watereth the hills from

his chambers, the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth." We can only follow the process of vegetation a very short way. We know, indeed, that the seed dies, and is decomposed, for it is not quickened except it die; and then it germinates, and new life succeeds. But the entire process is mysterious as it is invisible; it is hidden from man's scrutiny, and high above man's comprehension; while in those secret processes in the sky above and in the earth below we trace the handiwork of God, without which the earth would be barren as the granite and unfruitful as the sea. The faith of the husbandman rests securely on the established law of the earth's fertility, produced and promoted as it is by the mighty power of God; while his patience is justified by the uniformity of such natural law. "Behold," says James, "the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain." This parable affords great encouragement to both faith and patience, and the encouragement thus afforded forms a main feature of the parable. When, therefore, like the husbandman, we prepare the soil of the heart diligently and dutifully, and when we sow thereon the seed with carefulness and caution, and duly supplicate the blessing of heaven on our spiritual handiwork, looking up and expecting an answer, we have no more that we can do, and no more that we need to do. We may then safely leave the result to God; we may commit it quietly and confidently to his hand, assured that he will give the increase in due time and in due measure. This principle is embodied in the husbandman sleeping and rising night and day, while the seed springs and grows up, he knows not how. There is much comfort in this assurance, much also to strengthen faith and brighten hope. Though all our care will not cause the seed to grow, though we cannot give power to the Word, though God alone can make it effectual, though we must wait patiently for his influence, though the process is mysterious in itself and hidden from the eye of man; yet we may forbear all hurtful anxiety, and forego all unseemly impatience, leaving the issue entirely to God. We must beware of enacting the part of those silly children who pull up their plants or flowers from time to time in order to examine the roots and inspect the process of growth. Though we cannot unveil the inward processes of grace any more than of nature, yet we need not dread any failure in those processes. What is required of us is to use aright the means, and instrumentalities and agencies within our reach, without meddling with what is too high above us or too deep below us; and we may feel fully persuaded that, if we labour in the Lord, our labour will not be in vain.

IX. THE GRADUAL GROWTH. By the earth of herself according to the course of nature, and by the concurring power of the God of nature, fruit is brought forth; "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." In like manner, the Word of truth received by faith into the heart becomes the work of grace. This the Spirit carries on while the preacher sleeps and can do no work, or is engaged in other business, or has entered into rest; for the Word preached not unfrequently does its work even after the preacher has been gathered to his fathers. When men sow their seed, they sow "not that body that shall be, . . . but God giveth it a body as it pleases him." The old dies, but the new blade shoots up; in this we have an emblem of the new nature, for "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." Next comes the ear, and in this we find the promise of, and preparation for, fruitfulness. At length we have the full corn in the ear; this is the fruit of righteousness to the praise and glory of God, and this includes all the graces of the Christian character, and all the virtues of the Christian life. Thus Divine truth, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, first enlightens the mind, then convinces the understanding, gradually quickens the conscience, and converts the heart, while, last of all and best of all, it saves the soul.

X. THE HARVEST. Now the great end is attained. The faithful recipient of the Divine Word has grown in grace; he has added to his "faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity;" he has attained to deadness to the world, spirituality of mind, heavenly dispositions, resignation to the Divine will, conformity to the Divine image, and assimilation to the Divine character. When, moreover, the Christian has thus borne the fruits of godliness, made himself useful in the Church and in the world, having served his generation in both;

and when the good purposes of his heavenly Father have been fulfilled in him and by him; at length the harvest comes, the sickle is put in; meetened for heaven, ripened for the garner of the skies, he is taken home like a shock of corn in his season. Thus to the child of God "to die is gain"—the gain of heaven for earth, of rest for labour, of glory everlasting instead of the varied sorrows of this present time.—J. J. G.

Vers. 30—34. Parallel passage: Matt. xiii. 31, 32.—*The mustard seed.* I. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED AND THE LEAVEN. The latter parable refers rather to the growth of grace in the heart, the former to the extension of the Church in the world; the latter to the assimilating power of Divine grace in the human heart, the former to progressive development and final establishment of the Church on earth.

II. THE SMALLNESS OF THE MUSTARD SEED. The smallness of the mustard seed, if the expression be not proverbial, furnishes at least a striking and frequent subject of comparison. Thus, our Lord uses the illustration in reference to faith, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed;" and the present comparison, both here and in the parallel passage of St. Matthew, presents the same figure.

III. THE PROGRESS OF THE CHURCH. While this parable may possibly refer to the progress of religion in the heart, its best exemplification is found in the constantly and rapidly progressive extension of the Church of Christ since apostolic times. When all its members met in that upper room in Jerusalem, they numbered only a hundred and twenty. Other believers, no doubt, were to be found in the holy city at that early day of the Church's history; but, be that as it may, the number above given included the entire membership of those who publicly met together and professed themselves disciples of the Nazarene. Ten days after—the interval between the Ascension and Pentecost—there took place a signal outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and in connection with St. Peter's sermon there were added to the Church about three thousand souls. Some short time after this, as we read in Acts iv., "the number of the men" who publicly avowed their faith in Christ "was about five thousand." The next notice of the numerical progress of the gospel is contained in Acts v., where we are informed that "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." In the beginning of the very next chapter we have an incidental notice to the effect that "the number of the disciples was multiplied." A further and still fuller notice is found in the seventh verse of the same chapter (Acts vi.), where it is stated that "the Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great number of the priests were obedient to the faith." And all this occurred within a period of less than two years, and in the very place where the Founder of our holy religion had been put to death as a malefactor. Thus the mustard seed, comparatively, if not absolutely, the smallest of seeds, becomes a plant, and the plant becomes a tree, and the tree spreads out its branches, and the branches shelter with their shadow, and lodge the fowls of the air beneath their umbrageous foliage. So with the Church of Christ: it has spread from country to country; it has extended from continent to island, and from island to continent; it has enlarged its borders and multiplied its members. It has powerfully influenced all civilized nations, and all barbarous nations to which it has extended have become civilized. And now kingdoms many and mighty repose in safety and rest in security under this widespread gospel tree, like the birds of the air taking refuge under and nesting among the branches of the magnificent mustard tree of this parable.—J. J. G.

Vers. 35—51.—(See on ch. vi. 45—56.)—J. J. G.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER V.

Vers. 1.—And they came to the other side of the sea. The other side of the sea would be the south-east side of the sea. Into the country of the Gadaraeans, or rather, *Gerasenes*, which is now generally admitted to

be the true reading, from Gerasa, *Gerasa*, or *Kersa*. There was another Gerasa, situated at some distance from the sea, on the borders of Arabia Petraea. The ruins of the Gerasa, here referred to, have been recently discovered by Dr. Thomson, 'The Land and the Book'. Immediately over

this spot is a lofty mountain, in which are ancient tombs; and from this mountain there is an almost perpendicular declivity, literally (*κηρυμός*) corresponding accurately to what is required by the description in the narrative of the miracle. Dr. Farrar ('Life of Christ') says that in the days of Eusebius and Jerome, tradition pointed to a "steep place" near "Gerasa" as the scene of the miracle. The foot of this steep is washed by the waters of the lake, which are at once very deep.

Vers. 2—5.—There met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. St. Matthew says that there were two. St. Luke, like St. Mark, mentions only one, and him "possessed with devils." The one mentioned by St. Mark was no doubt the more prominent and fierce of the two. This does not mean merely a person with a disordered intellect. No doubt, in this case, as in that of insanity, physical causes may have helped to lay the victim open to such an incursion; and this may account for cases of possession being enumerated with various sicknesses, though distinguished from them. But our Lord evidently deals with these persons, not as persons suffering from insanity, but as the subjects of an alien spiritual power, external to themselves. He addresses the unclean spirit through the man that was possessed, and says, "Come forth, thou unclean spirit" (ver. 8). *There met him out of the tombs.* The Jews did not have their burial-places in their cities, lest they should be defiled; therefore they buried their dead without the gates in the fields or mountains. Their sepulchres were frequently hewn out of the rock in the sides of the limestone hills, and they were lofty and capacious; so that the living could enter them, as into a vault. So this demoniac dwelt in the tombs, because the unclean spirit drove him thither, where the associations of the place would accord with his malady and aggravate its symptoms. St. Matthew, speaking of the two, says that they were "exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass that way." The demoniac particularly mentioned by St. Mark is described as having been possessed of that extraordinary muscular strength which maniacs so often put forth; so that all efforts to bind and restrain him had proved ineffectual. No man could any more bind him, no, not with a chain (*οὐδὲ ἄλυσεν*). Chains and fetters had often been tried, but in vain. Frequently too, in the paroxysms of his malady, he would turn his violence against himself, crying out, and cutting himself with stones.

Ver. 6.—And when he saw Jesus with afar. These words, "from afar," explain the fact of our Lord being immediately met

by the man as soon as he left the boat. Vers. 3—5 inclusive must be regarded as parenthetical. They describe the ordinary condition of the demoniac, and his sad wild life from day to day. From the high ground which he frequented he had seen the boat, in which Jesus was, nearing the shore. He had seen the other boats. Perhaps he had seen the sudden rise of the storm and its equally sudden suppression; and he, like others who witnessed it, was affected by it. So he hastened to the shore; he ran and worshipped him. He felt the power of his presence, and so he was constrained through fear to do him reverence, for "the devils also believe and shudder (*ἐπίσσωσι*)" (Jas. ii. 19).

Ver. 7.—He cried with a loud voice; that is, the evil spirit cried out, using the organs of the man whom he possessed. What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? From hence it appears that, although at the great temptation of our Lord in the wilderness, Satan had but an imperfect knowledge of him; yet now, after the evidence of these great miracles, and more especially of his power over the evil spirits, there was a general belief amongst the hosts of evil that he was indeed the Son of God, the Messiah. I adjure thee by God, torment me not. The torment which he dreaded was that which he might suffer after expulsion. So St. Luke says that they entreated him that he would not command them to depart into the abyss. Great as this mystery of evil is, we may believe that the evil spirits, although while they roam about upon this earth they are in misery, still it is some alleviation that they are not yet shut up in the prison-house of hell, but are suffered to wander about and find their depraved pleasure in tempting men; so that, if possible, they may at last drag them down with them into the abyss. For they are full of hatred of God and envy of man; and they find a miserable satisfaction in endeavouring to keep men out of those heavenly mansions from which, through pride, they are themselves now for ever excluded.

Vers. 8, 9.—For he said unto him, Come forth, thou unclean spirit, out of the man; literally, *for he was saying* (*ἐλεγε*). The unclean spirit endeavoured to arrest, before it was spoken, that word of power which he knew he must obey. So in what follows, He was asking him (*ἐπηρώτα*), What is thy name? Why does our Lord ask this question? Clearly to elicit from him an answer that would reveal the multitude of the evil spirits, and so make his own power over them to be fully known. And he saith unto him, My name is Legion; for we are many. The Roman legion consisted of six

thousand soldiers. But the word is here used indefinitely for a large number. St. Luke so explains it where he says (viii. 30), "And he said, Legion: for many devils were entered into him." This revelation is doubtless designed to teach us how great is the number as well as the malignity of the evil spirits. If one human being can be possessed by so many, how vast must be the host of those who are permitted to have access to the souls of men, and if possible lead them to destruction! Satan here imitates him who is "The Lord of hosts." He too marshals his hosts, that he may fight against God and his people. But "for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

Ver. 10.—And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. It would appear as though this evil spirit felt (speaking in the name of the other evil spirits) that if they were driven out from their present dwelling-places, their condition would be changed for the worse; and that until the time should come when they were to be cast into the abyss, their best relief was to possess some materialism, to occupy flesh and blood, and that flesh and blood tenanted by a spiritual being, through whom they might torment others. They could find no rest, no relief, but in this. "The unclean spirit, when he is gone out of the man, passeth through waterless places, seeking rest, and findeth it not" (Matt. xii. 43). Even the swine were better than nothing; but that dwelling did not serve the evil spirits long.

Ver. 11.—Now there was there nigh unto the mountains—literally, *on the mountain side* (πρὸς τὰ ὄρη)—a great herd of swine feeding. St. Matthew says (viii. 30), "There was a good way off from them:" our Lord's interview with the demoniac was on the sea-shore. "The herd of swine," two thousand in number (as St. Mark tells us, with his usual attention to details), were at a distance, feeding on the slopes of the mountain. The Jews were not allowed to eat swine's flesh. But Jews were not the only inhabitants of that district. It had been colonized, at least in part, by the Romans immediately after the conquest of Syria, some sixty years before Christ. It was in this district that ten cities are said to have been rebuilt by the Romans, whence the territory acquired the name of "the Decapolis." And though the Jews were forbidden by their Law to eat this kind of food, yet they were not forbidden to breed swine for other uses, such as provisioning the Roman army.

Ver. 12.—Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And he gave them leave. They could not enter even into the

swine without Christ's permission; how much less into "the sheep of his pasture"!

Ver. 13.—The unclean spirits came out, and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place (κατὰ τοῦ κρημνοῦ)—literally, *down the steep*—into the sea, . . . and were choked in the sea. By this Christ shows of how little worth are earthly possessions when set in the balance with the souls of men. The recovery of this demoniac was worth far more than the value of the two thousand swine.

Ver. 14.—And they that fed them fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. St. Matthew mentions only the city. St. Mark's narrative is more full. No doubt many of these swineherds lived in the country districts; and so the fame of the miracle was spread far and wide. The swineherds would take care that the owners should understand that it was through no fault or carelessness on their part that the swine had perished; but that the destruction was caused by a power over which they had no control. And they—i.e. the owners—came to see what it was that had come to pass. Their first care was to see the extent of their loss; and this was soon revealed to them. They must have seen the carcasses of the swine floating hither and thither in the now calm and tranquil sea; and when they had thus satisfied themselves as to the facts, "they came to Jesus." St. Mark here uses the historic present, "they come to Jesus," that they might behold him of whom these great things were told, as well as the man out of whom the evil spirits had gone when they entered into the swine. They were, of course, concerned to know the magnitude of their loss, and the mode in which it had happened, that they might see whether there were any means by which it might be made up to them.

Ver. 15.—And they come to Jesus, and behold him that was possessed with devils sitting, clothed and in his right mind, even him that had the legion; and they were afraid. St. Luke adds that they found him sitting at the feet of Jesus. It is likely enough that the man, as soon as he found himself dispossessed, had cast himself at the feet of Jesus, and was worshipping him; but that, when bidden by Christ to sit, he chose to place himself at his feet. "He was clothed, and in his right mind." What a contrast to the previous description! "And they were afraid." They dreaded Christ's power. They saw that he was almighty; but they did not seek to know his love, and so to attain to that love which "casteth out fear."

Vers. 16, 17.—How it befell him that was possessed with devils, and concerning the swine. The loss of the swine. They

could not get over that. They thought far more of the worldly loss than of the spiritual gain; and they began to beseech him to depart from their borders. St. Luke (viii. 37) says that "they were taken (*συνείχοντο*) [literally, *were holden*] with great fear." This was the dominant feeling. They did not entreat him to depart out of humility, as though they felt themselves unworthy of his presence; but out of servile, slavish fear, lest his continued presence among them might bring upon them still greater losses. They saw that Jesus, a Jew according to the flesh, was holy, powerful, Divine. But they knew that they were Gentiles, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. Wherefore they feared lest he should punish them more grievously, both on account of their being Gentiles and on account of their past sins. It was not, therefore, so much on account of hatred, as out of a timorous fear, that they besought Jesus that he would depart out of their borders.

Vers. 18-20.—And as he was entering into the boat, he that had been possessed with devils besought him that he might be with him. It was natural that he should desire this. It would be grateful and soothing to him to be near to Christ, from whom he had received so great a benefit and yet hoped for more. And he suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee. Our Lord here takes a different course from what he so often took. He saw, no doubt, that this restored demoniac was fitted for missionary work; and there was no reason to apprehend any inconvenience to himself in consequence from a people who wished to get rid of him. And he went his way, and began to publish in Decapolis.—In Decapolis, *i.e.* through the whole district of the ten cities—how great things Jesus had done for him. This would bring him into contact alike with Gentiles and with Jews; and so this dispossessed demoniac became a missionary to both Jew and Gentile. Here he planted the standard of the cross.

Ver. 21.—Jesus now crosses over the sea again, and apparently in the same boat, to the other side, the opposite shore, near to Capernaum. St. Matthew (iv. 13) distinctly tells us that he had left Nazareth, and was now dwelling at Capernaum, thus fulfilling the ancient prophecy with regard to Zebulun and Nephthalim. The circumstances under which he quitted Nazareth are given by St. Luke (iv. 16-31). St. Matthew (ix. 1) calls Capernaum his own city. Thus as Christ ennobled Bethlehem by his birth, Nazareth by his education, and Jerusalem by his death, so he honoured Capernaum by making it his ordinary residence, and

the focus, so to speak, of his preaching and miracles. When Jesus returned, a great multitude was gathered unto him; and he was by the sea. St. Luke says that the people welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. Again he placed himself by the sea, probably for the convenience of addressing a multitude, and of relieving himself of the pressure, as before, by taking refuge in a boat.

Vers. 22, 23.—One of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name. He appears to have been one of the "college of elders," who administered the affairs of the synagogue. The name Jairus, or "Ya-eiros," is probably the Greek form of the Hebrew *Jair*, "he will illuminate." He fell at his feet, and besought him greatly; it is literally (*πίπτει καὶ παρεκάλει*), *he falleth at his feet, and beseecheth him*. We picture him to ourselves, making his way through the crowd, and as he approached Jesus, kneeling down, and then bending his head towards him, until his forehead touched the ground. My little daughter is at the point of death. St. Matthew says, "is even now dead;" St. Luke says, "she lay a dying." The broken sentences of the father are very true to nature. All the expressions point to the same conclusion, that she was *in articulo mortis*. In each narrative the ruler is represented as asking that Christ would hasten to his house. He had not reached the higher faith of the Gentile centurion, "Speak the word only."

Ver. 24.—And he went (*καὶ ἀπῆλθε μετ' αὐτοῦ*)—literally, *and he went away with him*—and a great multitude followed him, and they thronged him (*συνέθλιβον αὐτόν*); literally, *pressed close upon him, compressed him*. This is mentioned purposely by St. Mark, on account of what follows. St. Matthew says (ix. 19), "And Jesus arose, and so did his disciples." Observe here the promptitude of Christ to assist the afflicted. St. Chrysostom suggests that our Lord purposely interposed some delay, by healing, as he went, the woman with the issue of blood, in order that the actual death of Jairus's daughter might take place; and that so there might be full demonstration of his resurrection power.

Vers. 25, 26.—A woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years. All the synoptic Gospels mention the length of time during which she had been suffering. Eusebius records a tradition that she was a Gentile, a native of Caesarea Philippi. This disease was a chronic hemorrhage, for which she had found no relief from the physicians. Lightfoot, in his 'Horæ Hebraicæ,' gives a list of the remedies applied in such cases, which seem quite sufficient to account for St. Mark's statement that she was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse. St. Luke,

himself a physician, says that she "had spent all her living upon physicians, and could not be healed of any."

Ver. 27, 28.—This woman, having heard of Jesus—literally (*τὰ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ*), *the things concerning Jesus*—came in the crowd behind, and touched his garment. St. Matthew and St. Luke say "the border (*τοῦ κρασπέδου*) of his garment." St. Matthew tells us that "she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole." From this it appears that, though she had faith, it was an imperfect faith. She seems to have imagined that a certain magical influence was within Christ and around him. And the touching of the border of his garment (the blue fringe which the Jews were required to wear, to remind them that they were God's people) was supposed by her to convey a special virtue. Yet her faith, though imperfect, was true in its essence, and therefore was not disappointed.

Ver. 29.—And straightway—St. Mark's favourite word—the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt (*ἔγνω*)—literally, *she knew*—in her body that she was healed of her plague (*ὅτι γὰρ ἀπὸ τῆς μάστιγος*); literally, *that she hath been healed of her scourge*. The cure was instantaneous.

Ver. 30.—The words in the Greek are *ἐπιγινούς ἐν ἑαυτῇ τὴν ἐξ αὐτοῦ δύναμιν ἐξελθοῦσαν*: Jesus, perceiving in himself that the power emanating from him had gone forth, turned him about in the crowd, and said, Who touched my garments? Christ sees the invisible grace in its hidden operations; man only sees its effects, and not always these.

Ver. 31.—St. Luke (viii. 45) adds here, "When all denied, Peter said, and they that were with him, Master, the multitudes press thee and crush thee. But Jesus said, Some one did touch me; for I perceived that power had gone forth from me." This incident shows the mysterious connection between the spiritual and the physical. The miraculous virtue or power which went forth from the Saviour was spiritual in its source and in the conditions on which it was imparted, but it was physical in its operation; and that which brought the two together was faith. Multitudes thronged the Saviour, but only one of the crowd touched him.

Ver. 32.—He looked round about (*περιεβλέπετο*)—another favourite word of St. Mark.

Ver. 33.—The woman fearing and trembling, etc. Every word in this verse is expressive. It was her own act. She seemed to herself as though without permission she had stolen a blessing from Christ; and so she could hardly venture to hope that the

faith which had prompted her would be accepted. Hence her fear and terror, and her free and full confession. We thus see the gentleness of Christ in his dealings with us. Perhaps the woman had intended to escape, satisfied with a temporal benefit, which would hardly have been a blessing at all, if she had been suffered to carry it away without acknowledgment. But this her loving Saviour would not permit her to do. It was the crisis of her spiritual life. It was necessary that all around should know of the gift which she had endeavoured to snatch in secret. Our Lord might have demanded from her this public confession of her faith beforehand. But, in his mercy, he made the way easy to her. The lesson, however, must not be forgotten, that it is not enough to believe with the heart. The lips must do their part, and "with the mouth confession must be made unto salvation."

Ver. 34.—Our Lord here reassures this trembling woman, who feared, it may be, lest, because she had abstracted the blessing secretly, he might punish her with a return of her malady. On the contrary, he confirms the benefit, and bids her be whole of her plague. The Greek expression here is stronger than that which is given as the rendering of what she had used when we read that she said within herself, "I shall be saved (*σωθήσομαι*)."
Here our Lord says, Go in peace, and be whole (*ἰσθὲ ὕγιης*). It is as though he said, "It is not the mere fringe of my garment, which you have touched with great faith, and with some hope of obtaining a cure—it is not this that has cured you. You owe your healing to my omnipotence and your faith. Your faith (itself my gift) has delivered you from your issue of blood; and this deliverance I now confirm and ratify. 'Go in peace.'" The original Greek here (*ὑπάγε εἰς εἰρήνην*) implies more than this. It means "Go for peace." Pass into the realm, the element of peace, in which henceforth thy life shall move. It is here obvious to remark that this malady represents to us the ever-flowing bitter fountain of sin, for which no stypcio treatment can be found in human philosophy. The remedy is only to be found in Christ. To touch Christ's garment is to believe in his incarnation, whereby he has touched us, and so has enabled us by faith to touch him, and to receive his blessing of peace.

Ver. 35.—Our Lord had lingered on the way to the house of Jairus, perhaps, as has already been suggested, that the crisis might first come, and that so there might be full evidence of his resurrection power. The ruler must have been agonized with the thought that, while our Lord lingered, the life of his dying child was fast ebbing away.

And now comes the fatal message to him. Thy daughter is dead (*ἀπέθανε*); the scribe expresses that her death was now a past event. Why troublest thou the Master any further? (*τί ἔτι σκύλλεις τὸν διδάσκαλον;*). The Greek word here is very strong. It is to vex or weary; literally, *to flay*. The messengers from the ruler's house had evidently abandoned all hope, and so probably would Jairus, but for the cheering words of our Lord, "Fear not, only believe."

Ver. 36.—The words of the narrative, as they stand in the Authorized Version, are: As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. But there is good authority for the reading *παράκούσας* instead of *εὐθέως ἀκούσας*, which requires the rendering, *but Jesus, not heeding, or overhearing*. This word (*παράκουω*) occurs in one other place in the Gospel, namely, in Matt. xviii. 17, "And if he refuse to hear them (*ἐὰν δὲ παρακούσῃ αὐτῶν*). Here the word can only have the meaning of "not heeding," or "refusing to hear." This seems to be a strong reason for giving the word a somewhat similar meaning in this passage. And therefore, on the whole, "not heeding" seems to be the best rendering. Indeed, it seems to cover both meanings. Our Lord would overhear, and yet not heed, the word spoken.

Ver. 37.—Here we have the first occasion of the selection of three of the apostles to be witnesses of things not permitted to be seen by the rest. The other two occasions are those of the transfiguration, and of the agony in the garden. We now follow our Lord and these three favoured disciples, Peter and James and John, to the house of death. They are about to witness the first earnest of the resurrection.

Ver. 38.—St. Matthew here says (ix. 23) that when Jesus came into the ruler's house, he "saw the minstrels (*τοὺς αὐλητὰς*)," i.e. the flute-players, "and the people making a noise." This was the custom both with Jews and with Gentiles, to quicken the sorrow of the mourners by funeral dirges. The record of these attendant circumstances is important as evidence of the fact of death having actually taken place.

Ver. 39.—Some have regarded the words of our Lord, the child is not dead, but sleepeth, as really meaning that she was only in a swoon. But although she was actually dead in the ordinary sense of that word, namely, that her spirit had left the body, yet Christ was pleased to speak of death as a sleep; because all live to him, and because all will rise at the last day. Hence in the Holy Scriptures the dead are constantly described as sleeping, in order that the terror of death might be mitigated, and im-

moderate grief for the dead be assuaged under the name of sleep, which manifestly includes the hope of the resurrection. Hence the expression with regard to a departed Christian, that "he sleeps in Jesus." Then, further, this child was not absolutely and irrecoverably dead, as the crowd supposed, as though she could not be recalled to life; since in fact our Lord, who is the Lord of life, was going at once to call her back by his almighty power from the realms of death into which she had entered. So that she did not appear to him to be dead so much as to sleep for a little while. He says elsewhere, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." Christ, by the use of such language as this, meant to show that it is as easy with him to raise the dead from death as sleepers from their slumbers.

Ver. 40.—They laughed him to scorn. He suffered this, in order that the actual death might be the more manifest, and that so they might the more wonder at her resurrection, and thus pass from wonder and amazement to a true faith in him who thus showed himself to be the Resurrection and the Life. He now put them all forth; and then, with his three apostles, Peter, James, and John, and the father and the mother of the child, he went in where the child was. The common crowd were not worthy to see that in which they would not believe. They were unworthy to witness the great reality of the resurrection; for they had been deriding him who wields this power. It is remarked by Archbishop Trench that in the same manner Elisha (2 Kings iv. 33) cleared the room before he raised the son of the Shunammite.

Ver. 41.—The house was now set free from the perfunctory and noisy crowd; and he goes up to the dead child, and takes her by the hand and says, *Talitha umei*; literally *Little maid, arise*. The evangelist gives the words in the very language used by our Lord—the *ipsissima verba*, remembered no doubt and recorded by St. Peter; just as he gives "Ephphatha" in another miracle.

Vers. 42, 43.—Here, as in other miracles, the restoration was immediate and complete: straightway the damsel rose up, and walked. Well might the father and the mother of the maiden and the three chosen apostles be amazed with a great amazement (*ἐξέστησαν ἐκστάσει μεγάλῃ*). And then, for the purpose of strengthening that life which he rescued from the jaws of the grave, our Lord commanded that something should be given her to eat. It has often been observed that in the examples of his resurrection power given by Christ there is a gradation: 1. The daughter of Jairus just dead. 2. The widow's son from his bier. 3. Lazarus from

his grave. The more stupendous miracle is yet to come, of which our Lord's own resurrection is at once the example and the

pledge, when "all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—20.—*The Lord of spirits.* There was for Christ, during his earthly ministry, no escape from personal toil—from the claims made upon his benevolence by human misery, or from man's ingratitude. He crossed the lake to seek repose, but at once, on landing, was met by a case of the utmost wretchedness and need, demanding the exercise of his compassionate authority. His stay was brief, yet long enough to earn the thanks and the devotion of one poor liberated captive, and long enough to qualify and to commission that healed one for a sacred ministry of benevolence.

I. We have here a representation of **THE WRETCHED STATE OF THE SINNER.** 1. That state is attributable to *possession by an evil power*. This does not, indeed, affect man's responsibility, but it affirms the action of supernatural agency. Sinners "have fallen into the snare of the devil." 2. The *signs* of that state are many and distressing. Like the demoniac, the sinner is injurious to himself, is harmful to others, and consequently is unfit for society. 3. A picture is here painted of the sinner's *hopeless condition*. As the demoniac's possession was manifold ("we are legion"), was prolonged, and was so severe that all human efforts had failed to bring relief, so was the condition of the heathen world when the Saviour came to earth—a condition so debased and so confirmed in its misery that to the human eye no dawn-streak of hope was visible. And the heart, abandoned to the control of evil, is in a state for which no human relief or help is available.

II. We have here a representation of **THE SINNER'S MIGHTY SAVIOUR.** A greater contrast than that between the wretched and raving maniac and the calm and holy Jesus it would not be possible to imagine. Yet the two came together. Divine authority and compassion encountered human sin, foulness, and degradation, and the demon was exorcised and the sufferer made whole. 1. Observe the *Divine authority of the Lord is acknowledged*. It is certainly remarkable that from the mouth of the demoniac should come the confession that Jesus is "the Son of the Most High God." This Christ is; and, were he not this, his approach would bring no comfort to the sinner's heart. 2. In addition to this verbal acknowledgment, we observe *an actual submission* to and experience of Christ's power. "The unclean spirit came out." Jesus is "mighty to save." As during his ministry, so wherever the gospel is preached, the power of Christ is proved in actual experience. However formidable the foe may be, Jesus is the Conqueror.

III. We have here a representation of **THE SINNER'S SALVATION.** 1. There is *complete deliverance* from the tyranny of former enemies. "Taken captive by the Lord's servant unto the will of God"—such is the description given by an apostle of the great and spiritual emancipation which nevertheless brings souls into a new and better bondage. 2. *Sanity* is a consequence of our Lord's interposition. "When he came to himself" is the description of the change which took place in the repenting prodigal. Only he who turns to God can be truly said to be "in his right mind." 3. *Tranquillity* is a natural sign of a spiritual restoration. The Saviour is the Prince of peace, and the gospel is a gospel of peace, and peace is a fruit of the Spirit. True religion calms agitation, stills the tempests of the soul, and brings harmony to human life.

IV. We have an example of the **WITNESS OF THE SAVED SINNER TO THE SAVIOUR.** The conduct of the healed demoniac is an emblem of the consecrated testimony of the ransomed soul to the great Deliverer. 1. It is prompted by grateful affection—affection that would fain abide in the valued society of the Redeemer. 2. It is appointed and authorized by the Lord himself: "Go to thy house," etc. 3. It is borne especially to those nearest and dearest: "thy friends." 4. It consists of personal experience: "how great things the Lord hath done for *thee*." 5. It excites interest and wonder. Such testimony from such a witness cannot be without effect.

The saved lead others to the same Saviour whose virtue they have themselves experienced.

Vers. 21—24, 35—43.—*The maiden's spirit recalled.* This narrative is a striking example of intercession, and of its appreciation and reward by the Lord Jesus. The suppliant, Jairus, pleaded for his daughter, and he did not plead in vain. Jesus wrought upon his behalf one of the three miracles of raising from the dead which have been recorded by the evangelists.

I. MAN IS TROUBLED, AND JESUS IS COMPASSIONATE. The distress of a father's heart, when his child lies at the point of death, is intense indeed. Jesus comprehended and entered mentally into all relations and all experiences of humanity, for he was himself the Son of man. How touching in its simplicity is the record of our Lord's response to the ruler's appeal: "He went with him"! He is ever the same, "touched with a feeling of our infirmities." He will go with us to the house of mourning, to the chamber of sickness, to the bed of death; and his presence will lighten the sufferer's load and soothe the sufferer's heart.

II. MAN IS IN HASTE, AND JESUS LINGERS. The entreaty of the father and the concern of the thronging multitude are vividly portrayed. How natural that, in so critical a case, there should be a general anxiety to reach the abode where the dying maiden lay! Yet the great Physician pauses to entertain another application for relief, to speak words of grace to another—to a timid, downcast spirit. There is no haste in Christ's methods. It often seems to those who seek him that he delays his succour. In their impatience they may think themselves unheeded. But it is not so; the Divine leisure with which the Lord of grace is wont to act should awaken our admiration and our confidence.

III. MAN DESPAIRS, AND JESUS REASSURES. There was a limit to the faith which was cherished towards Christ. It was thought that he could heal the sick, but it was not dreamt that he could raise the dead. When the little maiden had breathed her last, the household was abandoned to hopeless grief. But this was the moment when the Divine Friend displayed the deepest tenderness of his nature. "Fear not, only believe." Such were his words of comfort, fitted to soothe and to inspire desponding hearts with heavenly hope. Let us learn the lesson that, where Jesus is, there is no place for despair. These words of his come to us when downcast, cheerless, and oppressed beneath the cares and woes of life.

IV. MAN IS AGITATED, AND JESUS IS CALM. There is a sublime contrast between the demeanour of the friends of Jairus and the demeanour of Jesus. A tumult of weeping and wailing is quite in accordance with Eastern manners, and it is in accordance with human nature that the same persons who bewailed the maiden's death should, when another turn was given to their excited dispositions, have laughed the Lord to scorn. How noble and dignified in such a scene appears the demeanour and the language of Christ! He rebukes the noisy crowd and puts them forth, and with tranquil and authoritative mien leads the parents, with the three favoured apostles, into the sad chamber of death. "The world is for excitement, the gospel for soothing." There is but One whose presence can banish alarm and disquietude, and can shed a sweet calm over the dwelling agitated by fear and anguish.

V. MAN IS POWERLESS, AND JESUS IS MIGHTY TO HELP AND SAVE. The anxiety of the parents, the lamentations of the mourners, were vain and powerless to save the child from death or to recall her to life; but the touch and the call of Christ summoned back the spirit that had fled. In the deepest woe the grace and might of Jesus are most conspicuous. He is able to quicken such as are dead in trespasses and sins, to breathe upon them the breath of life. The soul that hears his word, "Arise!" awakens from the long, deep lethargy of sin and lives anew.

VI. MAN IS AMAZED, AND JESUS IS COLLECTED AND CONSIDERATE. No wonder that the parents of the girl were overwhelmed with astonishment. And how like the Lord, to display an interest so tender in the reanimated damsel as to direct that she should be supplied with food! And how like him, too, instead of seeking to increase his fame and favour with the people, to arrange that the miracle should for the present, as far as possible, be concealed! Wisdom, consideration for others, were apparent in his whole demeanour.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. The incident gives us a beautiful representation of the power and the love of a Divine Saviour. 2. And an example of the necessity and the advantage of faith in Jesus, in order to spiritual life and blessing. 3. And a striking instance of the efficacy of intercessory prayer. We may well be encouraged to imitate the believing and urgent entreaties of Jairus.

Vers. 25—34.—*Faith conquering timidity.* Far from withdrawing from scenes of distress and woe, our Lord Jesus was found wherever human sin or misery invited his compassion and invoked his aid. On this occasion he was passing towards the house of mourning, the chamber of death, and on his way paused to pity and to heal a helpless, timid, trembling sufferer.

I. A PICTURE THIS OF HUMAN NEED AND SUFFERING. Amidst the thronging multitude were persons of various circumstances, character, and wants. In all companies there are those who have spiritual ills which only Christ can heal, spiritual desires which only Christ can satisfy. Sin and doubt, weakness, sorrow, and fear, helplessness and despondency,—these are to be found on every side. The case of this poor woman deserves special attention. 1. Her need was *conscious and pitiable*. 2. It was of *long continuance*: for twelve years had she suffered and had obtained no relief. 3. Her case was *beyond human skill* and power. She had gone to many physicians, had endured much in undergoing treatment, had expended all her means, and yet, instead of being better, was worse than before. And now apparently hope was taking flight, and the end seemed near. An emblem this of many a sinner's case—conscious of sin and of a tyranny long endured, yet helpless and despairing of deliverance.

II. A PICTURE THIS OF THE APPROACH AND CONTACT OF TREMBLING FAITH. The graphic narrative of the evangelist is very suggestive as well as very impressive. 1. There was *faith* in the woman's coming to Christ at all. She might have questioned the possibility of his curing her. She might have fancied that, lost in the crowd, she should not gain his notice and help. 2. The faith, however, seems to have been *imperfect*. Something of superstition probably impelled her to seize the hem or sacred fringe of his garment, as though there were magic virtue in the bodily presence of the Saviour. 3. Yet the venture of faith *overcame the natural shrinking* and timidity she experienced. Doubt and diffidence would have kept her away; faith drew her near, and she atole to him. It was the last resource; as it were, the dying grasp.

"I have tried, and tried in vain,
Many ways to ease my pain;
Now all other hope is past,
Only this is left at last:
Here before thy cross I lie;
Here I live or here I die."

4. Faith led to *personal contact*, to the laying hold of the Redeemer. Jesus often healed with a touch, by the laying on of his hand; and here he acknowledged the grasp of trembling confidence. They that come to Jesus must come confessing their faults and needs, applying for his mercy, and laying hold upon him with cordial faith.

III. A PICTURE THIS OF CHRIST'S TREATMENT OF A BELIEVING APPLICANT. The conduct of Christ has been recorded in detail, for the instruction and encouragement of all to whom the gospel comes. 1. Remark his recognition of the individual. This woman was one of a multitude, yet she was not unobserved by the all-seeing and affectionate Saviour. He never overlooks the one among the many; his heart can enter into every case, and succour every needy soul. 2. Remark the immediate and efficacious exercise of his healing power. What others could not accomplish in long years, the Divine Healer effected in a moment. Thus Jesus ever acts. His grace brings pardon to the penitent, justification to the guilty, cleansing to the impure. Immediate grace is the earnest of grace unfailing. 3. We see our Lord accepting grateful acknowledgments. Pleasing to him was the courage that, spite of timidity, "told him all the truth." He ever delights in the thankful tribute of his people's praise and devotion. 4. We hear our Lord's gracious benediction. The language is very rich and full. There is an authoritative assurance of blessing; there is the adoption of the healed one into the spiritual family, conveyed in the one word, "Daughter;" there is the recogni-

tion of her saving faith; there is the dismissal in peace; and there is the assurance that the healing is complete and permanent.

APPLICATION. 1. Let this representation of the Saviour induce every bearer of the gospel to bring his case to Jesus. 2. Let every applicant to Christ be encouraged by the assurance of the Lord's individual regard and interest. 3. Let faith lay firm hold of Christ, and that at once without delay.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—20.—Legion. General question of demon-possession. An aggravated form of Satanic influence. Intelligible enough on the principle of provocation and desperation: light and darkness are strongest side by side. The advent of Christ roused to intense activity and excitement the whole demoniacal realm. In this scene there is exemplified—

I. MORAL ANTAGONISM. (Vers. 2, 6.) 1. *Instinctive.* Spontaneous; prescient; yet furnishing no intelligible reason. "An intensified spiritual presentiment" (Lange). 2. *Weakness of the demoniac shown by:* (1) Excitement. (2) Self-contradiction. Attraction and repulsion alternating. (3) Use of borrowed weapons. The exorcism, doubtless so often uttered over him by magicians and ecclesiastics, is all the lore he seems to possess in the way of religion. 3. *Strength of Christ proved by calmness and self-possession, and resolute pursuit of his object.* 4. *Utter and absolute.* "What have I to do with thee? . . . Torment me not."

II. MORAL ASCENDANCY. (Vers. 9—13.) 1. *Instant exercise of authority.* Calm, self-possessed, and fearless. He had already discerned and measured his opponent, and decided as to how he would deal with him. 2. *Spiritual insight and skill.* The great Physician had made diagnosis of his case. Mental surgery was needed, based upon the most profound truths of psychology. The man had to be discriminated and freed from the indwelling demon. The former had little or no sense of his own personal identity. A Roman legion had probably been quartered near, and when he saw their number and power he felt that they somewhat resembled that which had quartered itself within his own nature. With maniacal vanity he readily adopted the title, "Legion." Pride and wretchedness were probably both involved in the retention of the name; it represented the dominant principle in his confused consciousness. Christ asked him, "What is thy name?" that he might rouse him to a sense of personal identity: a wise measure. 3. *Rectoral discipline.* "He gave them leave:" apparently their own suggestion, but granted (1) on principle of highest curative psychology—objective disenchantment; the character and distinctness of the unclean occupants of the man's nature being thus outwardly and visibly set forth, his better self, enfranchised, would be the more likely to assert itself; (2) in pursuance of rectoral discipline. The unclean, unprincipled habits of the people in violating the Law being thus avenged.

III. MORAL DECISION. (Vers. 14—20.) The Gadarenes had to make up their minds with respect to the great Stranger. 1. *The data.* (Vers. 14—16.) Material and moral stood forth in opposition, as in so many other instances. How was their relative importance to be estimated? 2. *The decision.* A unanimous petition for him to depart. How could such men be expected to judge otherwise? They had grand ideas of Christ, but of the wrong sort. 3. *The response.* Instant departure. He took them at their word. "They believed not on him," and acting upon their unbelief urged their request. The conflict of anger and fear, fawning and obstinacy. *A word was enough;* nay, a wish, even unexpressed, has often secured the same result. Not the storm, not the evil repute of the people, not even the horror of the demoniac, could deter him from coming; but a word sent him away! How careful should men be in their attitude to the heavenly Visitant! He went, but not without leaving, in the person of the restored maniac, a monument of his saving power and grace. Every region and every heart has its witness to the same.—M.

Vers. 9, 10.—Satanic possession a destruction of personal identity. I. INSTANCES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

II. IMPORTANCE OF PERSONALITY FOR TRUE RELIGIOUS AND MORAL LIFE.

III. THE RESTORATION OF THIS THE GREAT WORK OF CHRIST.—M.

Vers. 10; 12, 13; 17—19.—*Prayers granted and denied.* No caprice visible in our Lord's decisions. On the contrary, great moral principles are revealed. The whole conduct of Christ on this occasion, therefore, is of importance for the practical guidance of Christians.

I. THE PETITION OF THE DEMONIAIC. (Ver. 10.) "He besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country." No heed is paid to this request, notwithstanding its passionate earnestness. Why? 1. *The man himself was not praying.* He was depersonalized and besotted by the possession of the devils, and not responsible for his words or actions. It was to free him from this thralldom Christ had undertaken his case. 2. *It would have neutralized the intended mercy to the man to inflict the evil upon others.* 3. *There was no real submission in the real petitioners.* They were still devils, unchanged in their character, and desirous of working further mischief. Powerless, they still desired to do evil.

II. THE REQUEST OF THE DEVILS. (Vers. 12, 13.) This was granted, notwithstanding the character of those who made it. A marvel, truly; devils heard and answered by Christ! Is he in league with them? 1. *It was a choice of a lesser of two evils.* It seemed necessary that some visible form should receive the dispossessed spirits, that all, especially the man himself (cf. on the probable principle of cure, the preceding sketch), might be able to realize that the dispossession had actually taken place. As simply dispossessed, they might have taken up their abode in some other soul; but by giving direction to them after dispossession, they were confined to brutes; and the catastrophe that resulted was probably foreseen by Christ. In the destruction of the swine the demons were dismissed speedily right out of the terrestrial sphere. 2. *And in that destruction a punishment was inflicted upon the Gadarenes,* who as yet were sordid, neglectful of the Law (forbidding the rearing of swine), and unspiritual.

III. THE ENTREATY OF THE GADARENES. (Vers. 17, 18.) It was at once answered, Because: 1. *It involved a deliberate and intelligent rejection of the Saviour.* They had seen his wondrous moral triumph and the destruction of the swine; but in their estimate the material loss far outweighed the spiritual gain. 2. *There were others elsewhere who were "waiting for him."* 3. *The healed demoniac might be even more effectual as a preacher than himself.* He was a lasting monument of his power and grace. Time might be needed to let the miracle sink into the popular conscience.

IV. THE PRAYER OF THE RESTORED MAN. (Vers. 18, 19.) A natural desire under the circumstances. Fear lest the devils should return if he were left to himself, and gratitude and love for his Benefactor, doubtless actuated him. But he is denied! This must have wounded his feelings, and disappointed him. But: 1. *It was not prudent for Christ at that time to have one so closely identified with devils in his company and occupied in his service.* The charge had been made (ch. iii. 22) that he was in league with Satan. 2. *It was not the best life for him to lead in his present condition.* Privation and excitement were not suited to one who had been emaciated and weakened by the devils. 3. *A work of greater use and personal obligation awaited him where he was.* He was the only disciple of Christ in that benighted land. Those who had been scandalized by his previous life, and had suffered from it, were to be first considered. The home that had been desolated was to be revisited, and cheered by the kindly presence and saving influence of the redeemed one.

GENERAL LESSONS. 1. *Prayers may be granted in anger, and denied in love.* 2. *Lesser evils may be allowed to prevent greater ones.* 3. *Duties are to be considered before privileges.*—M.

Ver. 14.—*Unfriendly heralds of Christ.* I. DIFFICULTY OF GETTING THE GOSPEL TRULY AND FAITHFULLY PREACHED.

II. CONTRAST THIS WITH THE RAPID SPREAD OF FALSE NOTIONS ABOUT CHRIST, HERESIES, UNSETTLING ALARMS, ETC.

III. COMPENSATIONS. 1. *The existence of Christ is made known.* By-and-by his character will vindicate itself. 2. *Curiosity is aroused and feeling excited.* Almost anything is better than indifference. And the witnesses of his truth and

grace are everywhere. 3. *The disciples of Christ are compelled to vindicate their Master.*—M.

Ver. 15.—Monumental miracles. The tableau—Christ, and the demoniac sitting at his feet. More impressive and sublime than even the rebuking of the storm. Such trophies are better than sermons, because—

I. THEY ARE AN ABIDING REMINDER AND EXAMPLE.

II. THEY ARE PATENT TO ALL, AND CAN BE UNDERSTOOD BY ALL. “Living epistles, known and read of all men.”

III. THEY DEFY REFUTATION, AND DEMAND TO BE EXPLAINED.—M.

Vers. 21—34.—Ministries broken in upon. Seldom do we find Christ going straight through with a course of teaching or work. Interruptions constantly occurring; many ministries making up the one great ministry. The more intimate connection of ver. 21 is given in Matt. ix. 18 (“while he yet spake these things”). Not that Matthew means that Christ was still at table, nor that Mark’s order is wrong. The feast of Matthew (ch. ii. 15) is not stated by Mark to have taken place in immediate succession to the conversion, but is narrated in the second instead of the fifth chapter, because of the obvious connection of the two events. Accepting, therefore, the order of the first Gospel, we see—

I. CHRIST INTERRUPTED. 1. *In his teaching.* (Ver. 21; Matt. ix. 18.) Yet how full of interest the subjects—eating with publicans, and fasting! How significant these breakers! How natural, in a world so full of disturbing and changing influences as this! 2. *In his intended mercy.* As he goes to the ruler’s house the incident of the woman in the crowd takes place (vers. 25—34), and he is delayed. Yet the prayer of Jairus was urgent, and broken with apprehensive emotion. Only this was still more pressing, for it was (1) actual, present, long-endured suffering and shame; (2) a demand of faith on behalf of its own possessor (not, as in Jairus’s case, for another).

II. FRAGMENTS THAT MAKE A GRANDER WHOLE. We have no time to lament the breaking off—the seeming incompleteness—ere we are astonished at the commentary which is furnished in the incidents that follow. He is the great Physician—to the ruler’s daughter, the woman with the issue, and the two blind men alike; the Bringer of joy, too, to many by his healing mercies and gracious words. All need him, if they only knew it; and, participating in the blessings of his presence, they cannot mourn or fast, but must needs rejoice. And so in the case of the ruler; the delay really rewarded his faith by an actual illustration of Christ’s power, and so sustained him in the higher exercise of faith. “My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live” (Matt. ix. 18). This is a picture of many lives. We cannot escape interruptions. Yet are we not therefore to abandon *unity of purpose*. We may fail to finish all we seek to do, or to do it as we would; but *God holds the connecting harmony*, and will reveal it at last—or even sooner. The sermon broken off, the merciful intention delayed or frustrated, may prove greater blessings in the event than if suffered uninterruptedly to proceed to a visible or immediate completeness within themselves. The life or work divinely interrupted, but pursued with unity of faith and purpose to the end, will be a grander, more Divine thing than otherwise it could possibly have been.

LESSONS. 1. *How infinite the resources of the Saviour!* 2. *His teaching is inseparable from action and life.*—M.

Vers. 21—43.—Jairus’s daughter; or, the uses of bereavement. I. DISCOVERING THE NEED OF A SAVIOUR.

II. PERFECTING THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE BEREAVED.

III. REVEALING THE INFINITE MERCY, SYMPATHY, AND POWER OF CHRIST.—M.

Vers. 21—43.—Jairus’s daughter; or, the course of a true faith. I. ORIGINATED BY MANY CIRCUMSTANCES EVIDENT AND OBSCURE. The general ministry of Christ. Perhaps Jairus had been a witness of the centurion’s faith.

II. CALLED INTO EXERCISE BY GREAT AFFLICTION AND NEED.

III. TRIUMPHING OVER DIFFICULTIES.

IV. REWARDED BY INEFFABLE ANSWERS AND CONFIRMATIONS.—M.

Vers. 25—34.—*The healing of the issue of blood. The magnifying power of faith.* 'Twas but a touch, humanly speaking; yet was it a means of salvation to the believing soul.

I. TRANSFORMING LITTLE THINGS INTO MEANS OF GRACE. 1. *Many touches, but only one touch of faith.* This alone was effectual and saving. It is not human effort that saves, but the spirit of faith that lays hold of Christ. 2. *Only the hem of his garment.* Yet as effectual as if she had touched the body of Christ. How so? Because she touched him spiritually. All ordinances and outward means of grace are in themselves little—no better than the hem of the garment of Christ. It is the Saviour who is great when appealed to by a great faith. 3. *Making use of what was within reach.* Not perhaps the best means possible. But enough when accompanied by faith.

II. IN IMMEDIATE EARTHLY ENDS SECURING ULTERIOR SPIRITUAL ONES. The trembling and fearing woman not only secured the physical boon; the Saviour said, "Thy faith hath saved thee;"—a word that had a larger meaning than could be exhausted by a merely temporal relief or physical wholeness.—M.

Vers. 25—34.—*Salvation without money and without price.* A figure of the spiritual experience of man.

I. CONTRASTED WITH EARTHLY EXPEDIENTS OF SALVATION. These are expensive because: 1. *They waste the spiritual nature of man.* 2. *They increase rather than diminish the evil.* How forlorn the poor woman! How great the contrast with the "sleeping" child! Death in life is far worse than the natural death. It is not mourned for as the latter, and has all the added sorrow of disappointment and despair. 3. *They keep away from the true Saviour.*

II. YET IT MUST BE LEGITIMATELY SOUGHT. The grace of God cannot be stolen. The Saviour knows when a sinner receives his "virtue." There is only one way—the way of faith. The salvation of God is given, not taken by force or stealth; graciously given, with a benediction and a confirming assurance.

III. IT COSTS THE SINNER NOTHING, BUT THE SAVIOUR EVERYTHING.—M.

Vers. 25—34.—*The little of things of Christ great things for men.* How great an idea this woman had of Christ! If there was any fault, it was that she believed in the power, but did not trust the love of Christ. Yet her humility, which was as manifest as her faith, and her shame may account in great part for the stealth and surreptitiousness of her action.

I. MEANS OF GRACE ARE NOT TO BE DESPISED BECAUSE THEY APPEAR OUTWARDLY INSIGNIFICANT. Superstition, ritualism, etc., deprecated; yet an error incident to the opposite extreme. We are not saved by works, neither (literally) are we saved by faith. It is Christ that saves. This woman was touching Christ. God's sufficiency so different from man's.

II. NOT THE OUTWARD CHARACTER OF ANY ACT, BUT THE SPIRIT IN WHICH IT IS DONE, IS TO BE CONSIDERED CHIEFLY. The great end of religious acts is to bring us into communion with Christ. This of the woman was a mere touch, scarcely perceptible in the pressure of the crowd. The disciples had not observed it. But Christ felt that it had taken place, and had been effectual. There are manifold ways in which he reaches souls and is reached by them. The common experiences of life may be channels of greater blessing than the ordinances of the Church, when they are regarded in a believing, pious spirit.

III. PIETY IS OFTEN APPARENTLY OUT OF PROPORTION TO ADVANTAGES AND OPPORTUNITIES. 1. *Small things may often bring people to Christ, or keep them away from him.* 2. *Faith may often discover itself in the midst of ignorance and the absence of conventional religion.* 3. *Spiritual privileges may hinder instead of helping religious progress if they be not spiritually used.* This poor woman will rise in judgment against many who have made great show of religious observance, and condemn them. We may hear too often, if we do not lay to heart and obey. We require "grace for grace."—M.

Vers. 30—33.—"Who touched me?" **I. CHRIST'S SAVING GRACE IS ALWAYS CONSCIOUSLY EXERCISED.**

II. IT IS FAITH WHICH MAKES EFFECTUAL AND PECULIAR THE SINNER'S TOUCH OF THE SAVIOUR.

III. THE SECRET BELIEVER IS SUMMONED TO AN OPEN TESTIMONY. For the sake of: (1) honour; (2) spiritual health; and (3) the advantage of others.—M.

Ver. 35.—“*Why troublest thou the Master any further?*” A complaint that gives a glimpse of the harassing nature of Christ's work; drawn hither and thither by human distress and want, he was ever on the march, as men discovered their need of him.

I. THE APPARENT REASONABLENESS OF THE QUESTION. A complaint very rarely occasioned, still more rarely justified. On the present occasion, however, it seemed reasonable enough. For: 1. *Would not further urgency be useless?* “Thy daughter is dead;” and there was an end of the matter. Nothing more could be done. The sufferer had been taken out of the power of man. Surely it could not be expected that death would yield up its prey? Circumstances like this are constantly occurring in human experience. A distinction is made, often must be made, between things in which help may be looked and prayed for, and those in which it is inadmissible to pray. Are there not desperate cases of unbelief and sin for which we have given over praying? 2. *There were others requiring his attention and help.* It seemed wrong to monopolize Christ, especially when nothing could be done. Our grief may become a form of selfishness if it makes us inconsiderate of those who have perhaps suffered more than ourselves. If religion does anything for us, it should take us out of ourselves, and make us sympathetic with others. 3. *Christ was probably weary.* It had been an exciting day. The multitude thronged and pressed him. One poor sufferer had ventured to touch his garment, and at once he detected the action. Was it because he had to husband his force that he had taken such notice of it? Perhaps there were signs of weariness in his features and gait. It was thoughtfulness and respect for him that dictated the words, “*The Master: there were, therefore, disciples of Jesus in the family of Jairus*” (Bengel).

II. THE FALLACIES IT INVOLVED. It is obvious that a great portion of the previous considerations apply only to the human state of Christ, the days of his flesh and feebleness. But there are many objections to importunate and unceasing prayer that depend for their validity upon very human and limited conceptions of God the Son. It will be evident, therefore, that if the conduct of Jairus can be defended in “troubling the Master” when he was on earth, and subject to the conditions and infirmities of our nature, much more the urgency of those who besiege the throne of grace night and day with their requests. Doubtless Christ was often troubled by suitors for his aid and sympathy; but: 1. *It troubled him more when men did not care to seek him.* He reproved the unbelieving Jews: “*Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life*” (John v. 40). Indifference is more hateful to him than the greatest importunity. It is better to have a superstitious faith than no faith at all. Let us bless the weakness or the sorrow that brings us to him, making us feel our need of him. For, whether we think it or not, we cannot do without him. 2. *He himself encouraged men to “trouble” him.* What bold promises were his!—“*I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst*” (John vi. 35); “*I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live*” (John xi. 25); “*He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do*” (John xiv. 12); “*All things are possible to him that believeth*” (ch. ix. 23); and how often as here, “*Only believe!*” How universal his invitations!—“*If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink*” (John vii. 37); “*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matt. xi. 28). “*Ask, and it shall be given you,*” etc. (Matt. vii. 7). 3. *There is no case too desperate to bring to Christ.* No disease could baffle him whilst he was amongst men; even the grave gave up its dead at his potent word. And now “*all power in heaven and earth*” is his. Let us “trouble” him, therefore, with our sorrows and difficulties until he gives us relief. The care or desire which is not brought to him will sever us from him. We need not fear offending him; he is the Saviour, and it was that he might comfort and save men he came. Even whilst we think our case desperate, or say within ourselves, “*It is no use; it is not seemly to trouble him,*” we grieve his Spirit and resist his grace. The sinner who has sinned above measure, and is altogether vile,

may come. How is that promise fulfilled in him, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool!" (Isa. i. 18.)—M.

Vers. 2—6.—*The demoniac of Gadara.* This is the most detailed and important account given in the Gospels of demoniacal possession. Some are content to identify this phenomenon with lunacy or epilepsy, and suppose that our Lord used current phraseology upon the subject, although it expressed a popular delusion. We are slow to accept an explanation which would seem to credit him, who was always true, and himself "the Truth," with thus sanctioning error; especially as he used the same language when he was alone with his disciples, to whom he said it was "given to know the mysteries of the kingdom" (ch. ix. 28, 29). On the other hand, "possession" was not identical with moral degradation. The idea that Mary Magdalene was one of peculiarly evil life, because "out of her the Lord cast seven demons," is untenable; and there is little doubt that Caiaphas, who was shrewd, callous, and self-controlled to the last, was morally worse than such sufferers. Yet a weak yielding to animal passions was possibly the primary cause of possession by evil spirits, in whose existence we cannot but believe. Good was incarnate in those days, and evil also appeared as in a special sense incarnate. Buckle shows that there have been ebb and flow in the currents of national history; and so there have been in moral history, and in the days of our Lord spiritual forces were at the flood. The more we study the works and the Word of God, the more we are convinced that the inexplicable is not to reverently thoughtful men incredible or absurd. We enter on the study of this scene not with the hope of elucidating all mystery, but with the prayer that we may gain from it some spiritual help. Depicted as it is in strong, dark colours, it may enable us to understand the nature of Christ's work in the soul. We see here—

I. A MAN UNDER BONDAGE TO EVIL. The expression an "unclean" spirit, and the strange willingness to enter "the swine," denote the nature of the man. By the indulgence of appetite habit had conquered will, and he had no mastery over himself. That is the essence of "possession." Modern forms of it are not difficult to find. Describe the drunkard in his downward progress. At last, although he knows that ruin is before him, if temptation is in his way, his resolutions go to the winds. He is fascinated, or "possessed." So with the gambler and others. The condition of the demoniac resembled theirs. Domestic comfort was gone; the respect of others was lost; life was laid waste. He could see fingers pointing at him, eyes glaring on him, hell yawning for him, and his foes seemed coming on him resistlessly as the advance of the dreaded Roman "legion." Notice also the *deranging* effects of evil. He was "dwelling in the tombs"—a dreary, fearsome place, in harmony with his melancholy state. "All they that hate me, love death." The prodigal must "come to himself" before he returns to the Father. As this demoniac cut himself with stones, caring nothing for pain, so some destroy their moral sensibility; as he was a cause of misery or of terror, so is it with them; as he dreaded the near approach of a Judge he could not deceive, of a King he could not escape, so do they. Beware of tampering with sin.

II. A MAN CASTING OFF HUMAN RESTRAINTS. He was not without those who loved him. They had done their best to restrain or cure him. As they saw the growth of the evil, his parents would try to make the home attractive, inviting companions who would divert his thought; sisters would give up their innocent pleasure to fall in with his wishes; and when the outburst came, he was "bound with fetters and chains," lest he should harm himself or others. All in vain. Human restraint will never conquer moral evil. It represses it or alters its form, but does not root it out. The disorder and restlessness now seen in society portend serious issues, and indicate a breaking down of much in our boasted civilization. Education only changes Bill Sykes, the burglar, into Carker, the smooth, lying villain. We may restrain dishonesty, drunkenness, swearing, etc., so that they are no longer in respectable homes; but though we shut our eyes to the fact, the demoniac has only slipped his chains, and is there in "the tombs" and dens of our land. Parental restraint does much, but a time comes when independence and self-assertion make themselves felt, and the father or mother can only pray. Speak to those who still remember the old home in which they were so different from what they are now.

III. A MAN MEETING HIS SAVIOUR. With his morbidly quickened sensibility he knew who Jesus was, and had a presentiment of what was coming. His abject prostration, coupled with his daring misuse of the sacred name, indicate the distraction and disorder characterizing him. Christ dealt with him wisely, firmly, lovingly. He asked, "What is thy name?" He tried to summon the man's better self, to bring about a severance in his thought between himself and the evil; he gave him time to think what need he had of help, and what hope and possibility there was of it. Then to the demons came the decisive word, "Go!" and in a short time he was to be seen "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind." In each of us the dominion of sin must be broken, and Christ only can break it. Appeal to those who have long been under the dominion of sin, not to despair of themselves, on the ground that Christ does not despair of them. It was when his friends had given up this demoniac as hopeless that his redemption came. So, when self-reform has proved useless, and benefactors fail, and friends lose heart, he proves "able to save to the uttermost." Dealing pitifully with the sinner, he deals ruthlessly with his sin, and will hurl it into the depths of the sea.—A. R.

Vers. 17, 21.—*The rejection and the reception of Jesus.* Our text presents us with a striking contrast. Only a few miles of sea separated these people physically, but morally what a gulf was between them! On both sides of the lake Christ's words had been heard, and his works of power had been seen, but how different were the results! If he had been like us, variable in temper and disposition—at one time moody, at another genial—we might more easily account for this. For the dispositions of sinful men are like the Lake of Galilee—now raging in a storm, and now calm and still under the smiling heavens. But there was no such variableness in the Perfect Man. He was not cheery when the palm branches were waved on Olivet, and angry when his disciples forsook him and fled. He was not one thing in Gadara, and another in Capernaum. "He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." We must look elsewhere to account for this phenomenon, and we shall find its causes to be those which sever so widely in character and destiny, two hearers who sit in the same church, or two children who kneel beside the same mother's knee.

I. THE VARIOUS ASPECTS IN WHICH CHRIST PRESENTED HIMSELF. His relations to those around him were not simple, but complex. We may be great in *one* aspect of our character, but he was great in every aspect. 1. *He appeared as a Teacher.* In the synagogue, on the beach, amidst the crowd, he uttered Divine truth, and expected on the part of his hearers humble and obedient minds. He assumed that he knew what they did not know, respecting the nature of God, the meaning of the old dispensation, the phenomena of life, the coming future, etc. He adduced no arguments, but demanded (as he still demands), on the ground of what he was and is, the acceptance, or the rejection of his words. "He spake as one having authority." "This is my beloved Son; hear him." The acceptance of Christ as a Teacher implied much, because he taught no abstract theories, but enunciated principles which would revolutionize the views held about the Jewish economy, and would banish popular sins. Show what Christ demands of disciples now, and the spirit in which we should receive his revelation. 2. *He appeared as a Saviour.* Thought and action were blended harmoniously in Christ, and should be blended in every Christian. The Teacher of the people was the Healer of their bodies and the Purifier of their souls. This complex work is entrusted to the Church. Christ cured the demoniac, and restored sight to the blind, and health to the leper, as signs of what he had come to effect for men. 3. *He appeared as a Friend.* He entered the homes of the people at Capernaum and elsewhere, to cure illness in Peter's house, to bless children in another home, to share festivity in Cana, to weep with mourners in Bethany. This friendship the disciples rejoiced in. The presence of that Friend had delivered them in the storm. As such he presents himself at each heart, saying, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," etc.

II. THE DIFFERENT EFFECTS OF SUCH PRESENTATION ON THE PEOPLE. This may be illustrated not only by the conduct of the disciples and of the cured demoniac, but by contrasting the condition of the people of Gadara with that of the people in Capernaum. This exemplifies: 1. *The rejection of Christ.* The most astounding miracle wil. not produce faith in those who care more for their possessions than for purity and

love, such as Christ had imparted to the man who had the unclean spirit. The loss of the swine first awakened terror, but shortly afterwards indignation, amongst the people, who with mingled fawning and obstinacy "began to pray him to depart out of their coasts." He yielded to their wish, and, so far as we know, never returned again. Similarly he was rejected at Nazareth (Luke iv. 29) and in Jerusalem (Matt. xxiii. 37). In the instance before us the people feared the Holy One more than they had feared the demoniac. Their greed was up in arms against the destroyer of their swine; they cared more for them than for the rescue of a brother-man. Even now sometimes property is more jealously defended than personal rights. Christ laid down the principle that a man is better than a sheep, and he expressed that principle in his action at Gadara. Show how possessions and position are preferred to simple obedience to our Lord's will, so that from love to the world he is still rejected. 2. *The reception of Christ.* A right royal welcome was awaiting him on the other side of the lake. There the people had seen changes wrought in their homes by his power, and they had listened eagerly to his words of wisdom and love. They could not go back to their work as if there were no Christ who had come to save and comfort them. When he was gone, they prayed that the little boat might again come over the sea; and when the first glimpse of its sail was seen, the news spread swiftly far and wide. Fishers left their nets, and ran to call their mates, saying, "Jesus is coming!" old people tottered down to the sea because Jesus was coming; women who were mourning over their dear ones thought with thankfulness and love of his sympathy; and little children left their games in the market-place in order to be made glad by his smile. And still he comes amongst us in earnest words, in sacred song, in holy thought, in solemn memories. Then fling open the door of your heart, pour out the treasures of your love, wake up the songs of praise, as you say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"—A. R.

Vers. 18—20.—*Desire and duty.* There was wonderful variety in the methods of treatment adopted by our Lord in dealing with those who surrounded him. He touched the eyes of the blind; he gave his hand to those prostrate by illness or stricken with death; he sometimes spoke the word of healing first, and sometimes the word of pardon, always suiting himself to the special condition of each, according to his perfect knowledge of his deepest need. The same completeness of knowledge and of consideration reveals itself in his intercourse with those who had been blessed, and were now among his followers. Some were urged to follow him, others were discouraged by a presentation of difficulties. A beautiful example of this is given by Luke (ix. 57—62), in his account of those who spoke to our Lord just before he crossed the lake. The same gracious consideration of what was really best for one of his followers is seen here. And his disciples now do not all require the same treatment, nor have they all the same work to do or the same sphere to fill.

I. THE CONVERT'S DESIRE. (Ver. 18.) "When Jesus was come into the ship," or, more correctly (Revised Version), "as he was entering into the boat," the delivered demoniac prayed that he might be with him. It was a natural desire, and a right one, although all the motives which prompted it were possibly not worthy. As in us, so in him, there was a mingling of the noble with the ignoble. Let us see what actuated him. 1. *Admiration.* No wonder that he sat at the feet of this Mighty One, and gazed upon him with adoring love. Angels bow before him; the redeemed cast their crowns at his feet. Reverence and awe are too rarely felt now. Proud self-sufficiency characterizes the civilized world, and even the professedly Christian Church. It is well to know, but it is better to adore. Consciousness of ignorance and weakness, in the presence of God, leads to worship. Let reverence characterize our search into the Divine Word, our utterances in God's name, our approaches to his throne. 2. *Gratitude.* Having received salvation, this man longed to prove his thankfulness, and he naturally thought that an opportunity would be found, while following Jesus, to defend his reputation or to do him some lowly service. Under the old economy many thank-offerings were presented. The firstfruits of the fields and flocks were offered to the Lord, and any special blessing received from him called forth special acknowledgment. Show how thank-offerings have died out of the Church, and how they might be profitably revived. Point out various modes of showing thankfulness to God. 3. *Self-distrust.* Near the Deliverer he was safe, but might there not be some relapse

when he was gone? A right feeling on his part and on ours. See the teaching of our Lord in John xv. on the necessity of the branch *abiding* in the vine. 4. *Fear*. The people were greatly excited. They had begged Christ to go out of their coasts, lest he should destroy more of their possessions. It was not improbable that they would wreak their vengeance on a man whose deliverance had been the cause of their loss. They did not believe, as Christ did, that it was better that any lower creatures should perish if only one human soul was rescued. But this is in harmony with all God's works, in which the less is being constantly destroyed for the preservation and sustenance of the greater. The luxuriant growth of the fields is cut down that the cattle may live; myriads of creatures in the air and in the sea are devoured by those higher in the scale of creation than themselves; living creatures are slain that we may be fed and clothed. In harmony with all this, the destruction of the swine was the accompaniment of, or the shadow cast by, the redemption of the man. And high above all these mysteries rises the cross of Calvary, on which the highest life was given as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. In this event we can see glimpses of Divine righteousness and pity; but these people of Gadara shut their eyes to them, and were angry at their loss. Amongst them this man must "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

II. THE CONVERT'S DUTY. (Ver. 19.) 1. *His work was to begin at home*. "Go home to thy friends." His presence there would be a constant sermon. In the truest sense he was "a living epistle." Sane instead of mad, holy instead of unclean, gentle instead of raving; he was "a new creation." All true work for God should commence in the home. Self-control and self-sacrifice, gentleness and patience, purity and truth, in the domestic circle—will make the home a temple of God. 2. *His work was to be found among old acquaintances*. Some had scorned him, others had hated and perhaps ill-treated him. But resentment was to be conquered in him by God's grace, and to those who knew him at his worst he was now to speak for Christ. Such witness-bearing is the most difficult, but the most effective. John the Baptist told the penitents around him, whether publicans or soldiers, to go back to their old spheres, and prove repentance by changed life and spirit amid the old temptations. 3. *His work was to be quiet and unostentatious*. Perhaps Christ saw that publicity would injure him spiritually, for it does injure some; or it may be that the excitement involved in following the Lord would be unsafe for him so soon after his restoration. For some reason he had assigned to him a quiet work, which was not the less true and effective. Luke says that he was to *show* "how great things God had done for him," as if the witness-bearing was to be in living rather than in talking. Speak of the quiet spheres in which many can still serve God. 4. *His work was to spread and grow*. The home was too small a sphere for such gratitude as his. He published the fame of the Lord in "all Decapolis." This was not wrong, or forbidden, for there were not the reasons for restraint of testimony in Peræa which existed in Galilee. It was a natural and legitimate enlargement of commission. Similarly the apostles were to preach to all nations, but to begin in Jerusalem. He who is faithful with a few things is made ruler over many things, sometimes on earth, and invariably in heaven.—A. R.

Ver. 22.—*The faith of Jairus*. Faith was the one thing which Christ demanded of every suppliant who came to him. He asked the blind man the question, "Believest thou that I am able to do this?" He said to the father of the lunatic child, "All things are possible to him that believeth." Here he assured the woman in the crowd who had been healed, "Thy faith hath saved thee;" and to Jairus he said, "Be not afraid, only believe." All these are exemplifications of the words, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Faith is the hand which the soul stretches out to receive the blessings of pardon, salvation, and peace. If two men have sinned, and are both conscious of guilt, one may walk at liberty, while the other is burdened; because, though he is grieved about his sin, and hates it, and therefore has truly repented, the latter fails to believe the assurance, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Similarly, in trouble a Christian may exhibit a serenity which fills onlookers with wonder, not because his trouble is lighter or his sensibility less, but because he has faith to believe that God is doing good through the trouble, or that he will ultimately bring good out of it. This

faith in Christ Jairus had, though imperfectly, and his peace was in proportion to his trust.

I. JAIRUS'S FAITH WAS UNEXPECTED. He was "the ruler of the synagogue;" in other words, he was the president of one of the synagogues in Capernaum. It was his duty to superintend and direct its services, and to preside over its college of elders. As a pastor and professor—to use modern terms—he would have strong prejudices against a heretical teacher, such as our Lord was esteemed to be. We all know how difficult it is to go out of the usual course in any professional work; but although those who were associated with Jairus were hostile to our Lord, he dared to fall humbly at his feet. Sometimes the least hopeful, in human opinion, are the most richly blessed by Divine favour. Those who have often been taught and prayed for in our congregations may remain untouched, while some poor waif who has drifted in from the sea of life may find rest in Christ. Many shall come from the east and from the west, to sit down in the kingdom, while those who are favoured by circumstances and birth will be shut out.

II. JAIRUS'S FAITH GERMINATED IN GRIEF. He had been shut up with his little daughter who was ill, and for a time had been cut off from ordinary duties and associations. We can picture him to ourselves sitting beside her, with her little hand in his, while her eyes would often seek his with filial love. She had heard of Christ (what child in Capernaum had not?); possibly she had seen him, and loved him, as most of the children did. And while she spoke to her father, when his heart was specially tender, he could not but drink in thoughts of the love and power of Jesus, until, daring the worst that his friends could say of him, he fell at Jesus' feet. Sometimes those who have been associated with Churches or Sunday schools remain untouched by holy influence, until, having left their old connections, they fall into sin and shame, and then, knowing not whither in the world to turn, they look to Jesus. Sometimes professing Christians feel that they are far from God, and that even in their prayers he appears vague and unreal; till trouble comes—illness assails one whose life is precious, and then they pray in an agony of earnestness, as Jairus did, when "he besought Jesus greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death." Faith often springs up in the soil of trouble.

III. JAIRUS'S FAITH WAS SEVERELY TRIED. His hope was quickened when he saw Jesus rise up at once to follow him; but the crowd would not let our Lord hasten, and the poor woman meanwhile stole her blessing, and Christ delayed to speak with her and with others. Looking towards his home with ever-growing anxiety, at last Jairus saw what he dreaded seeing—a messenger, who said, "Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?" But he had to learn that no one in earnest was ever a "trouble" to the Lord; that when he seemed to be caring for another he was really thinking of him, and preparing him to receive a far greater blessing than any he had come to seek. Christ delayed that "the trial of this man's faith, being much more precious than that of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found to God's glory." We often find that there is delay in the coming of answers to prayer. We cry for light, and yet our way is dark, and we see not even the next step. We ask for deliverance, but the disaster comes which overwhelms us with distress. We entreat the Lord to spare some cherished life, but the dear one is taken away. Nevertheless, "let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

IV. JAIRUS'S FAITH WAS LOVINGLY ENCOURAGED. The storm tested this tree till its roots struck deeper; but when there appeared some risk of its falling, Christ said to the tempest, "Peace, be still." When the messengers said, "Thy daughter is dead," at once Jesus spoke; and "as soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith, . . . Be not afraid, only believe." Again, when Jairus entered his house, you can imagine how the father's heart sank as he saw the mourners for the dead already there. Till then he had been hoping against hope, as sometimes we do till we actually enter the darkened house where the dead one lies. Again Jesus interposed, saying, "The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth;" for so would he keep alive trust and hope till the blessing came, for which they were the preparation. "He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax."—A. R.

Ver. 24.—*The Lord amongst the needy.* The two miracles recorded in this passage were blended both in fact and in narrative, and together they illustrate some of the beauties of our Lord's character and work. Of these we select the following:—

I. HIS DISINTERESTED KINDNESS. No doubt his miracles were attestations of Divine power, but none of them were wrought with the idea of gaining personal fame. On the contrary, he endeavoured to silence the demands of gaping curiosity, and rebuked those who sought for signs and wonders. He refused the worldly homage which the people proffered when they wished to make him a king. He checked the spread of his own fame, lest men should care too much for material blessings, or should offer him the adulation a wonder-worker would have sought. If he had willed it, all the riches of the world would have been poured at his feet; but he had not where to lay his head; and although Jairus and others would have given all their possessions as the price of the benefits they sought, Christ bestowed the blessing "without money and without price." Herein he appeared as the true Representative—"the express Image" of him who delights in mercy for mercy's own sake. God gives air and sunshine without any effort, or solicitation, or thanksgiving on the part of man. He makes the garden of the cottager as fruitful as the fields of the rich, who can do so much more in return for his gifts. Ferns grow in shady hollows, and flowers adorn lonely cliffs, and even heaps of refuse. With a lavish hand the Creator bestows his gifts. "He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works."

II. HIS PERSONAL CONSIDERATION FOR EACH SUPPLIANT. If we are acquainted with many subjects, our knowledge of each is often proportionately inaccurate; if we know many persons, our acquaintance with them is but casual. If we concentrate our thought upon a person or a thing, that concentration is often exclusive of other persons and things. It was never thus with our Lord. Though he rules the worlds, there is not a single prayer unheard, or a feeble touch of faith unfelt. One who has been left alone to battle with his griefs may still say to himself, "But the Lord cares for *me*." He will no more hurry over a case than over that of the poor woman in the crowd, nor will he allow any delay to prevent the full coming of a blessing such as that which Jairus had at last.

III. HIS CONSTANT DESIRE FOR SPIRITUAL RESULTS. The temporal was to be the channel of the eternal. Healing of the soul often accompanied his healing of the body, and for the former he chiefly cared. On this occasion every moment was precious. The result of delay would be death and mourning in Jairus's home; yet he stayed not only to cure the woman, but to get her acknowledgment, and to give her and others fuller instruction. Had it been only her physical cure he sought, she could have waited a few hours; but the delay was largely for the spiritual good of Jairus. This ruler had not the faith of the centurion, who believed that Christ need not touch his servant, or even enter his house. Jairus's faith needed strengthening, and it was with this end in view that he saw what he did—a woman shut out from the synagogue of which he was ruler, who was saved by her simple faith, and this with the greatest possible ease on the part of the Lord. Hence it was that when the news came, "Thy daughter is dead," Jairus was not utterly dismayed, and under the influence of the cheering words of our Lord his faith revived in purer form. It is still true that delay in answer to prayer, during which grief and loss comes, is meant to work in us the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

IV. HIS BROAD SYMPATHIES AND ACTIVITIES. The love of Christ was not like some little stream which is confined between its two banks, and must be so confined if it is to be a blessing; but it was like the sea, which, when the tide rises, floods the whole shore, and fills every tiny creek as well as every yawning bay. He was never so absorbed in one mission as to neglect the side opportunities of life. Some of us have a tendency to absorption in one single duty, and the temptation is strong in proportion to the intensity and earnestness of our nature. But intenseness must not be allowed to make us narrow. To set before ourselves a special end is good, but this may lead to a neglect of other duties which is unnecessary and sometimes sinful. For example, some concentrate their interests in business or in pleasure, and declare that they have no time for devout thought; and at last they will find that they have grasped shadows and lost the substance. Christians fall into a similar error. Some do public service, and their names are widely known in the Church, but they have scarcely exercised any

good influence at home. The Church benefits, but the children are neglected. And often the opposite is true; for to many the home is everything, and the Church is nothing. Others, again, are so absorbed in one special work (that of the Sunday school, or temperance reform, for example), that they have little sympathy for their brethren who are engaged in other spheres of the manifold life of the Church. And there are others more guilty by far than these, who are absorbed in future work. They are always "going to do" this or that; but meanwhile their neighbours are uninfluenced and their own children are neglected. As they are not faithful with the few things, it would be contrary to God's law if they became rulers over many things. If our Lord had been animated by the spirit displayed by any of these, he would have said to the woman, "My errand is one of life and death; there must be no touching even the skirts of my garment now. All else must wait till I have discharged this mission." But, by the course he took, he taught us this lesson. There is nothing within the range of our power that is beyond the range of our responsibility. In all these respects Christ has left us an example, that we should follow his steps.—A. R.

Ver. 31.—*The touch of faith.* We may see in this poor woman what our Lord expects to see in all who would receive his blessing.

I. THE TREMBLING SUPPLIANT. There are many legends respecting her: that her name was Veronica; that she maintained the innocence of our Lord before Pilate; that she wiped his face on the road to Calvary with a napkin, which received the sacred impress of his features; that she erected a memorial to him at Paneas, her native town; etc. Improbable as much of this may be, it indicates that her faith was highly esteemed by the early Christians. The evangelists describe her as a certain woman who was worn by suffering, haggard from poverty (ver. 26), and ceremonially unclean, so as to be excluded from the consolations of public worship. She stole into the crowd, and by her touch of faith won the blessing she sought. 1. *Illness brought her to Jesus.* Most of those who came to him were afflicted—the blind, the leprous, the bereaved, the hungry, etc. Every sorrow is a summons to us to go to him. 2. *Faith prepared her for a blessing.* Even material gifts are received by the hand of faith. We all act in daily faith that the laws of God will continue—the farmer, the tradesman, etc. When Christ wrought a miracle (which was an epitome of one of God's works) he demanded faith. "He could not do many mighty works" where there was unbelief. He demanded trust in himself, both of Jairus (ver. 36), of this woman (ver. 34), and of us (Acts xvi. 31). If faith was truly exercised, erroneous views, such as this woman had, did not prevent a blessing.

II. THE EFFECTUAL TOUCH. "The border of the garment," to which Luke with more definiteness refers, was a sign of belonging to the chosen people (Numb. xv. 38), and Christ blamed the Pharisees for making it specially broad, as if they would assert their peculiar sanctity. The woman touched it, not only as the most convenient, but as the most sacred, part of the robe, and her superstition required to be cleansed away. 1. *There may be close outward contact with Christ without the effectual touch* (ver. 31). The crowd represents many who are in Christian lands and congregations. 2. *There cannot be living contact between us and him without his knowledge* (ver. 30). Though there was only one in the crowd who so touched him as to win salvation, that one was not unrecognized. So, if in the large congregation one earnest prayer, one praiseful song, is offered, it is accepted of him. The garment may represent to us our Lord's humanity, which is most within the reach of our understanding and love. St. Paul speaks of his "flesh" as a "veil," through which we pass into God's presence. Our Lord himself says, in another figure which sets forth the same truth, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." He was the true ladder between heaven and earth, between God and man, of which Jacob once dreamed.

III. THE REQUIRED CONFESSION. To acknowledge the change wrought in us by Divine grace is for God's glory, for the development of our own faith, and for the encouragement of others. We have responsibilities to the Church as well as to the Lord, which even shame and modesty must not lead us to ignore. Our Lord called for acknowledgment on this occasion, and it led to fuller instruction and to a deeper peace. He did not ask his question because he was ignorant, any more than Elisha

did after his heart had gone with Gehazi, or Jehovah did when he asked of Adam, "Where art thou?" If we know which of our children has done a certain act, we may nevertheless ask, "Which of you did this?" and whether it has been a right act or a wrong, the confession on such occasions is for the child's own good. With truer wisdom than we ever display Christ Jesus asked, "Who touched my clothes?" although he knew perfectly the life of her whose faith in him had made her whole; "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."—A. R.

Ver. 41.—The dead maiden. There are three instances of Christ's raising the dead recorded by the evangelists. In them a suggestive progression may be observed. On this occasion, a child had but recently died, and was laid upon the bed in her own home, amongst those who could still see the dear face, which was now void and irresponsible. On another occasion a young man had been dead long enough for his funeral to have begun, and he was being carried forth on a bier through the village in which he had lived. On the third occasion we read that when Jesus came to Bethany he found that Lazarus "had been dead three days already," and that the grave had closed on him. In all these he gave evidences of his life-giving power, and this with ever-growing intensity until that glorious day when he himself, in spite of the Sanhedrim's seal and the Roman guard, appeared as being in his own person the Conqueror of death and the grave. In answer to the prayer of Jairus, and perhaps to the prayer of his child before she died, Jesus came into the ruler's house. He found it filled with hired mourners, and heard the music of their flutes, the droning of liturgical chants, the wails and cries by which they sought, not only to express grief, but further to excite it. There was something stern about his utterance—"Give place!" Such an exhibition could not be other than offensive to One so sincere and true and natural as he was. And they who have his Spirit would rather be lamented by the few whose hearts are really touched with sadness, than by a multitude who offer ceremonial lamentation. Christ Jesus "put them all out." And we must get rid of all that is artificial and false if we would feel that Jesus is near, and we must be out of the company of the mockers who "laugh him to scorn" if we would hear his voice. It is in the quiet hour that he speaks, and we then can say—

"In secret silence of the mind,
My God and there my heaven I find."

We may look upon that dead maiden—

I. AS AN EXAMPLE OF PHYSICAL DEATH. When Jesus said, "She is not dead," he did not mean, as some suppose, that she was in a trance. He spoke metaphorically, just as he did when he said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," though immediately afterwards he said "plainly, Lazarus is dead." A boaster would have laid stress on the fact of her death in order to exalt his own power in restoring her, but Christ spoke of it as a sleep, because he wished, not to magnify himself, but lovingly to prepare her friends for the overwhelming joy that awaited them. Sleep is a true image of death. Like it, death follows weariness when the work of life has been hard and its sorrows many; it gives quietude of which the stillness of the body is but an outward sign; and it will be followed by a glorious awakening on the morning of the eternal day. Christ is "the resurrection and the life." He who gave this child back to her parents, and the lad at Nain back to his widowed mother, and Lazarus back to his sisters, will restore to us all those dear ones who now "through faith and patience inherit the promises."

II. A SYMBOL OF SPIRITUAL DEATH. The child lay there, unconscious that her friends were weeping for her, and that Jesus Christ was near. But suddenly she felt the touch of his hand. She heard his voice in language such as her mother and nurse used—the language of the children—saying, "Talitha cumi!"—"Dear child, arise!" and she opened her eyes and saw Jesus, and from that moment her heart was his. As truly he speaks now, in the stirring of sacred feeling, in the revival of old memories, in the loving influence of Christian friends; and they who obey his voice begin from that moment a happier life than they ever knew before. Very significant is the command of Christ "that something should be given her to eat." It was a reminder that she

really lived, that she had natural appetite, that he lovingly thought of the little things his dear ones needed, and that she was back again in the old life and home, though with a new love in her heart. So, many now who are dead to the old life and alive unto righteousness are called upon by their Lord to go back to their former work and companionship, but to serve him by shedding on these the light of holiness and love. From some he demands the public confession that they are on his side which he asked of the woman who had been secretly cured; but there are others to whom publicity is painful, whose experience is not to be blazed abroad, lest the beauty of childlike trust and the bloom of early piety be destroyed.—A. R.

Vers. 1—20.—*A man with an unclean spirit.* It is no part of the office of the homilist to enter upon the field of apologetics or exegesis. Criticism and interpretation provide the words with their definite meanings. Homiletics unfold and apply practical lessons. The difficulties of this narrative must, therefore, be discussed elsewhere.

I. Our attention is first arrested by the physical derangement exhibited in this case of possession by "an unclean spirit." The sadness of this spectacle is amply exhibited in the words of vers. 2—5. The overpowering of the entire personality of the victim by "an unclean spirit" points to a fearful possibility of the human life. Does sin open the door to the spirit of evil? The man was under the power of an unclean spirit, was led to do unclean acts. He dwelt remote from his fellows, "in the tombs." He was possessed of unusual physical strength; he could not be bound, "no, not with a chain." "No man had strength to tame him." This unusual power was exercised in "crying out and cutting himself with stones." Whatever the precise nature of this affliction, the scene exhibits the human life in *its uttermost derangement*.

II. On the moral side the attitude of the unclean spirit towards Jesus is expressed as one of utter repudiation: "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, the Son of the Most High God?" They had nothing in common. What can the spirit of evil have to do with Jesus? They mutually recede; they are mutually opposed. These appear before us as representing two kingdoms, wholly diverse in character. The one is a kingdom of evil and uncleanness; the other a kingdom of peace and righteousness. In the one the human life is disorganized; in the other it attains its true dignity, harmony, and blessedness. The one is for it a kingdom of darkness; the other a kingdom of light. In the one is death; life is found in the other. They have nothing in common; they are mutually exclusive, mutually destructive.

III. The supreme authority of Jesus, "Son of the Most High God," in the sphere of the human life is again illustrated, as also his attitude towards all human suffering. "With authority he commands," "Come forth, thou unclean spirit, out of the man," and in pitifulness he releases the oppressed. Thus is fulfilled that "which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases." Elsewhere is this more amply illustrated.

IV. The changed condition of the life when Jesus has exerted upon it his power, and evicted the spirit of uncleanness, is simply and beautifully portrayed in the picture presented to the eyes of the multitude who "came to see what it was that had come to pass," and beheld "him that was possessed with devils sitting, clothed, and in his right mind." With affectionate gratitude he now cleaves to Jesus, beseeching "him that he might be with him." The refusal was not in harsh judgment against the redeemed one, but for the instruction and profit of all others—that he may go and "publish how great things Jesus had done for him." Out of this incident let the central words, "What have I to do with thee?" be chosen as a test by which each may prove his nearness to Jesus or his recession from him. At one extreme lies this word of utter rejection—the word of Satanic repudiation; at the other, words which express the most complete absorption of the life in devotion to him—"To me to live is Christ." This declares the perfect identification of the individual life with the person, the mission, the spirit of Jesus. The one affirms, "I know no life within the sphere of Christ's kingdom;" the other, "I know no life beyond it. His name defies the boundary of my aims, my activities, my hopes. I am lost, buried, absorbed in him; to all things else I die."

How many are the gradations between these extremes! Let each test himself as to

the attitude he assumes towards Jesus. 1. As to a supreme submission to his authority as "the Son of the Most High God." 2. As to a calm and loving reliance upon him as "Jesus," the "Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." 3. As to a sincere alliance with him in the work of raising men from the dominion of evil—casting out the spirit of all foulness from the human life. 4. As to a perfect fellowship with Christ in the communion of sympathy and love.—G.

Vers. 21—43.—*Avowed and hidden faith.* The two incidents here grouped together show that in the neighbourhood of Capernaum faith in Jesus' power to heal has been established; nor is it to be wondered at, seeing the many instances of healing with which the people must be acquainted. The picture is striking. The "Teacher" has returned from his sail across the lake, where truly "the power proceeding from him had gone forth," even the stormy wind yielding to it. A crowd gathers around him. He is standing by the sea speaking, when "one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name," who had come seeking him, "and seeing him, he falleth at his feet," making supplication for his "little daughter," who is "at the point of death." Yet does he believe that if the hands of the Healer be laid upon her she shall "be made whole and live." Therefore his earnest entreaty, "Come thou." He who would that children should come to him refused not to go to them—a single child's life is precious in his sight. Presently the sad tidings are brought, "Thy daughter is dead." Why, therefore, should the Master be troubled any further? The faith of the father might well fail since now all hope of recovery is cut off. Is this man mighty enough "in hope" to believe "against hope"? Perhaps not without the strengthening word, "Fear not, only believe, and" (as St. Luke caught) "she shall be made whole." Truly "belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Then, as on another occasion (cf. Luke vii. 11—17), the word of command—"Arise"—is uttered to the dead by the "Lord of both the dead and the living," and another handful of the firstfruits of his resurrection power is plucked by his hand. Thus is the resurrection presented to us as the awaking of a little child, for in his view the dead "but sleepeth." Who can wonder that "they were amazed straightway with great amazement"? But this instance of open and avowed faith is for ever intertwined with an example of hidden faith of equal strength, though less obtrusive. The faith of the woman was hidden "within herself," its ingenuity only was showed, in that she came "in the crowd behind, and touched his garment." Surely this was not faith in the touch which was the supposed appropriate medium, the contact judged to be needful by the many that "pressed upon him that they might touch him." This, if a suitable sign, was not a necessary one, as the faith at least of one declared; "but say the word, and my servant shall be healed." All faith in the nostrums of physicians had died out from this woman's heart, for she had "suffered many things" of them, and was "nothing bettered, but rather grew worse." But in this Healer she did believe, and her faith, which the Lord detected as truly as he "perceived in himself" that the healing power which could proceed from him alone "had gone forth," he amply rewarded. "Who," of the many thronging me, "touched me" with that touch of faith? Faith was united with humility and truth; and "trembling and fearing, she fell down and confessed all." Once more, and for the instruction of the needy in all time, Jesus points to the "faith" thus honoured: it "hath made thee whole." Yes, the faith instrumentally, as our fathers have said, the touch mediately; but in reality, "I have healed thee in response to thy faith—I, who only can say, 'Go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.'" Hence are we to learn: 1. The power of Christ to raise the dead and to heal the sick, so that we may sleep calmly in death till he bid us arise. 2. His pitiful consideration towards even struggling faith, whether assailed by the rude doubt, "It is too late," or is too timid to declare itself openly. So that they of little faith need not doubt. 3. The true attitude of suffering in its confident approach to Christ for healing and help; even patient trustfulness, fearing not, and though persistent, yet humble. 4. The real support of all faith, the word of Christ, with such patient consideration of his works as leads to an apprehension of his Divine ability. May we not now stretch out our hand and touch him?—G.

Vers. 1—20.—*Christ, the Redeemer of the intellect.* I. THE EXTREME OF HUMAN

DEGRADATION AND MISERY. Bondage, impotent violence, suicidal mania. We cannot make out a theory of the facts; the facts are certain, and sad enough in this as in that age. There may be a *duplicity* in the consciousness of man, so that the being is threatened with a rending asunder. There is a certain reflection of this duplicity in all of us.

II. VIOLENT CONFLICT PRECEDES HAPPY CHANGE. There are crises when we dread the presence of the power of good; it means a sharp struggle at hand in the depths of the soul for our very life. Men will sometimes endure the present misery rather than undergo the pain which is to cure it. But the surgeon is no cruel tormentor; nor is the faithful teacher of the truth to be feared, but loved.

III. THE BLESSING OF A SOUND MIND. It may be lost; thank God it may be recovered. As there are parasites which prey upon the lower forms of animal and vegetable life, so there are ideas which may possess the imagination and confound the whole conscious life of the soul. Nowhere do we find the hope of *salvation* in all its senses, from physical and moral maladies, and those inscrutable to science, so clearly held out as in the gospel.

IV. THE DIVINE POWER AND PITY. "Tell thy friends how much the Lord has done for thee, and that he pitied thee." Power and pity fused in love: this is the soul of the world, the principle of its redemption. It has infused its strong enchantment into nature, and healing is ever open to us if we will yield to its influence on our being.—J.

Vers. 25—34.—*The magic of faith.* **I. THE CURE OF THE SICK WOMAN RESEMBLES A MAGICAL CURE.** Magical belief universally prevailed. The principle of it was, an operation on the nervous system through the wishes and the imagination. A representation in the mind of a cure is assumed, and acted on as a reality. So mysterious and great is the power of imagination over the mechanism of life, that cures might occasionally occur without any real cause external to the sufferer's mind.

II. BUT HERE THERE WAS A REAL CAUSE AT WORK. Coincident with the touch of the woman was the knowledge of curing virtue going forth from him, in the mind of Christ. Here is something impossible to explain—a connection that defies thought, but a real connection. And the great general lesson remains. Every change in the mind from sickness to health implies the correspondence of a thought on the sufferer with a reality without him. Whenever and however the energy of God is reflected as a thought of reality or a faith in us, a change for the better must and will occur.—J.

Vers. 35—43.—*Life victorious.* **I. LIFE IN ITS FULNESS KNOWS NO FEAR.** Cruel anxieties for the life of those we love are hushed by the voice of Jesus. He ignores death, being the resurrection and the life. We are under a deception of the senses, which Christ saw through. "The child did not die, but is sleeping." From another point of view our saddest facts may be lustrous with the significance of joy.

II. LIFE IS COMMANDING. "I say, Arise!" And the words are instantly obeyed. Richer as a parable than as a mere story. The fact is soon exhausted; the allegory is infinite. The voice is ever speaking, and resurrections are ever taking place. Lost joys are being recovered, dead forms reanimated. Who knows, as the Greek asked, whether what we call dying be not living, and living dying? But where Christ is, there is no death, no loss; only change from less life to more.—J.

Vers. 1—20. Parallel passages: Matt. viii. 28—34; Luke viii. 26—40.—*Gadarene or Gergesene demoniacs.* **I. CURE OF THE GADARENE DEMONIAIC.** 1. *The district.* The country called Gilead in the Old Testament, at a later period and in the New Testament goes by the name of Peræa. It was south of Bashan, and formed a sort of peninsula, bounded by the Yarmuck (anciently Hieromax) on the north, Arnon (now Wady el Mojeb) on the south, and Jordan on the east. The part of Gilead between the Yarmuck and Jabbok at present Wady Furka, is now *Jebel Aflun*; while the section south of the Jabbok is the Belka. In this region was a district called Decapolis, from the fact of its being studded over with ten cities, all, except Scythopolis, east of the Jordan. Of these cities one was Gadara, identified with the ruins of *Um Kets*, the capital of Peræa;

while Gergesa was the name of a little town, identified with the present Kerza, on the Wady Semakh, opposite Magdala. Either the territory adjacent was named after one or other of these towns, or St. Mark and St. Luke give a general indication of the district that was the scene of the miracle, when they call it the country of the Gadarenes; while St. Matthew gives the exact name, when he places it in the country of the Gergesenes. Dr. Thomson, in 'The Land and the Book,' says, "The city itself where it was wrought was evidently on the shore. . . . And in this Gersa, or Chersa, we have a position which fulfils every requirement of the narratives, and with a name so near that in Matthew as to be in itself a strong corroboration of the truth of this identification. It is within a few rods of the shore, and an immense mountain rises directly above it, in which are ancient tombs, out of some of which the two men possessed of the devils may have issued to meet Jesus. The lake is so near the base of the mountain, that the swine, rushing madly down it, could not stop, but would be hurried on into the water and drowned. . . . Take your stand a little south of this Chersa. A great herd of swine, we will suppose, is feeding on this mountain that towers above it. They are seized with a sudden panic, rush madly down the almost perpendicular declivity, those behind tumbling over and thrusting forward those before; and, as there is neither time nor space to recover on the narrow shelf between the base and the lake, they are crowded headlong into the water and perish." The name Gergesa has led to the supposition that the Gergashites, one of the seven Canaanitish nations, originally occupied this territory. Be this as it may, the district was pleasantly situated east and south-east of the Sea of Galilee, and the towns of Gadara and Gergesa were flourishing. The former was much the larger, and, according to Josephus, was rich—he says, "Many of the citizens of Gadara were rich men"—while that of Gergesa was of considerable importance. 2. *A sad contrast.* We cannot forbear noticing, as we pass, how much wretchedness may exist at the same time and in the same place with material wealth and mercantile prosperity, and amid all the beauties of natural scenery. This world itself all through is a strange mixture of mercy and of wrath; of the beautiful and the terrible; of plenty and of poverty; of sorrow and of joy; of sunshine and of shower. No April day was ever more variable. Here, in the country of the Gadarenes, with its well-to-do and wealthy inhabitants, and their profitable herds of swine, were two wretched creatures in extreme misery, both mental and bodily. While others bought and sold and got gain, these creatures were a terror to themselves and all around. While others occupied comfortable dwellings, these unfortunates tenanted sepulchral caverns which abounded in the district, and of which, as we have seen, some remain to the present day. While others were decently clad, or even gorgeously attired, these miserable individuals refused the decency of raiment. While others went at large, enjoying the sweets of life and that liberty which makes life sweet, these demoniacs had to be bound with chains and fetters (*ρέδαις*, equivalent to shackles for the feet, and *ἀλυσσας*, equivalent to chains in general). 3. *The number accounted for.* St. Matthew mentions two; St. Mark and St. Luke speak of one. How are we to explain this? The one mentioned by two of the evangelists was fiercer than his fellow; he was wilder and worse than the other. Or perhaps he had belonged to a higher class in society, and had moved in a better rank of life; or perhaps his position had been in some respect more prominent, whether owing to wealth, or profession, or education; and so the calamity that had befallen him was more conspicuous, and he himself better known. Something of this sort seems hinted at by St. Luke, when he speaks of the demoniac who met Jesus, as "a certain man out of the city." At all events, from any or all these causes St. Luke separates his case from the other, and singles him out from his comrade in affliction. 4. *A distinct feature added by each evangelist.* St. Matthew tells us that they made the way impassable for travellers; St. Luke, that he was without clothing; and St. Mark, in the passage specially under consideration, that he cried night and day, and cut himself with stones. St. Matthew's narrative of this case is somewhat meagre, St. Luke's fuller, and St. Mark's more circumstantial than either. 5. *The period in particular of demoniac possession.* That demoniac possession was distinct from disease, or lunacy, or epilepsy, is sufficiently evident from a single Scripture, namely, Matt. iv. 24, where we read that they "brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he

healed them." If asked why demoniac possession so manifested itself at the time of our Lord's appearance on earth, and not before, nor at least in the same way since? we must simply reply, in addition to what we have formerly said on this subject, that we can no more tell this than we can tell why small-pox manifested itself as a terrible scourge to our race at a certain time, and not sooner; or why cholera ravaged Europe at a certain period since the beginning of this century, and not before; or why that fearful plague, which the Greek historian has described with such graphic power and thrilling effect, never visited them till the time of the Peloponnesian war, and has never returned again, as far as history informs us, to renew its work of desolation there. But, though Scripture does not explicitly specify the cause, we can readily suppose a reason which has the appearance at least of probability. That reason we have already alluded to as found in Satan's well-authenticated powers of imitation, and we shall only subjoin in this place a few additional circumstances to confirm its probability. In early times, when the Lord afflicted Egypt with his plagues, and his servants, Moses and Aaron, wrought miracles in the field of Zoan, Satan had his servants there also, and Jannes and Jambres either possessed or pretended the power to work miracles too, counterfeiting or counteracting to the utmost of their capacity those of Moses and Aaron. From time to time, in the subsequent history of Israel, the Lord raised up prophets to instruct and forewarn the people; but who can be ignorant of the fact that Satan at times employed his prophets—false prophets to beguile and mislead? When our Saviour was on earth he warned his disciples that false Christs would arise and deceive many. Satan raised them up, and so history confirmed the statement. In like manner, when the Lord Jesus Christ had taken to himself a true body and a reasonable soul—when the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among men—Satan, by himself or by his servants, took possession of the bodies of men, cruelly torturing their flesh and agonizing their spirit. Nor are we prepared to say that demoniac possession has altogether ceased. We have seen men so act, and heard men so speak, and have been informed of such fiendish atrocity on their part, that we could account for their violent and outrageous conduct, or for their mischievous and diabolical acts, or for their horrid and blasphemous expressions, in no other way than that some demon, or the devil himself, had been permitted to take temporary possession of them.

II. THE PAST HISTORY OR PREVIOUS STATE OF THIS DEMONIAK. 1. *His madness.* When we compare and combine the account given of this poor demoniac by St. Mark and St. Luke, as also the brief notice of both demoniacs by St. Matthew, we have a most affecting picture. He had lost his senses and become exceeding fierce, so that no man could tame him, and no man could in safety pass that way. To the folly of the lunatic he had added the furiousness of the madman. Reason had reeled and left the helm; the once goodly ship had lost compass and chart and helmsman; it was drifting along, the sport of furious winds and stormy waves. 2. *His wretchedness.* This wretched man had not lost life, it is true, but all that could make life *desirable*, or render it happy. Unclothed, uncared for, he had fallen back into the condition of savage life, and to some extent had sunk lower than the brute. Houseless and homeless, he led a vagrant life—now a dweller in the mountains, now a tenant of the tombs. His *agony of mind* was fearful. When not attacking others he acted the part of a self-tormentor. His cries waked the echoes of the mountains, or made the gloom of the sepulchre more dreadful. But cries were insufficient to vent the deep anguish of his spirit. He cut himself with stones, and, by making gashes in his body, sought to transfer his suffering from the mind to the body, or at least divide it between them. All this had *lasted for years*, as it would appear from the statement, "he had devils long time." Neither had he known much of respite or aught of relaxation; "always night and day" this sorrowful and suffering condition continued; no lucid interval that we read of; no pleasant period of relief, however short, that we know of. At times, moreover, he was deprived of his *liberty*. This had frequently occurred. "He had often been bound with fetters and chains," until, by a sort of superhuman power, he plucked them asunder or broke them in pieces. 3. *The lessons to be learnt from all this.* There are two lessons to be learnt from this part of the subject. The *first* lesson we may learn from it is the condition of the sinner, and the *second* is the hostility of Satan. Confining attention to the first, while we have examined the condition of the demoniac as a fact—a stern fact, and a sad one—we cannot help thinking that it furnishes us at the same

time with a figure of what the sinner more or less is. He may, indeed, have the use of all his faculties, both of mind and body; nevertheless, he is a fool. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." He is beside himself; for we read of the prodigal, on his repentance and return to his father's house, that "he came to himself." Was ever folly greater than that of the man who prefers the trifles of time to the realities of eternity; who day by day barter the salvation of the soul for some gratification of sense; who, amid all the uncertainty of life, braves the danger of delay; who, notwithstanding the shortness of time, neglects from one season of opportunity to another, from one period of existence to another, the things that belong to his peace? What madness can equal his who treats all these things as though they were cunningly devised fables; who turns his back on God and his Word, on the sabbath and the sanctuary, on prayer and praise; who trifles with the great things of God until death stares him in the face, entertaining the vain fancy that a few tears, or prayers, or sighs on the bed of death will reverse all the past, make amends for a life of sin, and serve as a passport to heaven? That man is a demoniac in very fact, whom Satan so possesses, so leads captive at his will, and whose eyes he so blinds, that, though Providence is speaking with many a solemn voice; though his own frailty is pleading with him in the silence of his chamber, and during the night-watches; though mortality in sundry ways forces itself on his attention; though conscience is upbraiding, until it becomes so seared that it upbraids no longer; though the Spirit of grace is striving, as he has been striving long; though the Saviour with outstretched arms is saying, "Come, come and welcome," "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" though the eternal Father is waiting to embrace the returning penitent, and swearing, "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked;"—yet that sinner, in spite of all, keeps running along the downward way to hell, plunging deeper and deeper into wretchedness, rushing upon ruin, and rushing at the same time against the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler. If you exhort him, he is sullen; if you remonstrate with him, he is offended; if you reprove him, he is outrageous; if you speak plainly, yet affectionately, it may be he returns a surly answer, proving himself to be what Scripture describes, as "such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him." What though he is neither naked, nor houseless, nor dwelling among the tombs, nor bound with fetters! Are not the fetters of sin the worst that ever bound any man? "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." Has not a course of iniquity clothed thousands in rags, yea, left them without anything like decent clothes at all? Has not drunkenness, or lewdness, or idleness left hundreds without either house or home? Does not wilful waste make woeful want? Who can ever forget the story of the prodigal, when "he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat," when "no man gave unto him," and when he said, "I perish with hunger"? Has not the devil's service brought many a man to his tomb, humanly speaking, before his time? for the wicked do not live half their days. We need not speak of the misery which the sinner feels when the iron enters into his soul, the bitter regret, the unavailing remorse, the terrors of conscience, the second death, and the smoke of their torment ascending up for ever and ever.

III. THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE CURED DEMONIAK. 1. *The great change.* "The unclean spirits went out;" or, as St. Luke expresses it, "Then went the devils out of the man." Here was a practical exemplification of the Saviour entering into the strong man's house and spoiling his goods. The strong man was expelled by One stronger than himself. His terrible hold was loosened, his power paralyzed, captivity led captive, and the prey taken from the mighty. It is thus with every one who has been rescued from the grasp of Satan, who has been "snatched as a brand out of the burning," who has been convinced of sin and its attendant miseries and everlasting wretchedness, who has been enlightened with the knowledge of the grace and mercy of the Saviour, whose will has been renewed by the Spirit of God, and who has thus been made willing in the day of Divine power. Oh that the time may soon come, when in every land, and through all parts of the habitable globe, God in his great mercy shall open the blind eyes, and smite the fetters off the gyved limbs, and emancipate the oppressed of Satan, setting the captives for ever free! 2. *Evidences of the change.* People were curious to see the mighty miracle that had been wrought, and came to Jesus to see the strange sight about which, no doubt, they had heard much. And, arriving at the place, they

"see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, *sitting*." Ah! there is a change, and clear evidence of it. What a subject for a painting! The madman is come to his right mind; the maniac is tamed; reason, that godlike faculty, is restored; his fierceness is subdued. The anguish of his spirit has subsided; his wild cries have ceased; his self-inflicted bodily pains—those shocking wounds—are healed. People talk of the man who could tame the most savage horses, and hold them for a time as if spell-bound; they speak of menagerie-men who can tame lions and conquer bears; they laud the poet's comic humour in his piece entitled 'The Taming of the Shrew;' but the taming of shrew, or lion, or bear, or horse is nothing compared with the taming of this demoniac man, or of any other man whose fierce passions have been let loose, whose soul and body have been subjected to Satan's sway, and whose wicked and wayward career has been marked with as bad, if not worse, than demoniac madness. There he sits! as though the lion had become a lamb; as though the tiger had forgotten his fury, and laid aside his fierceness; as though the bear had changed its nature, and become a mild domestic creature—an emblem of that better day when all men shall become such, and a foreshadow of that coming time which the prophet describes so beautifully, when "the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together." 3. *His posture a proof of docility.* There he sits, *with the docility* of the child and the guileless simplicity of the Christian. There he sits, as Saul did in the days of his youth, an apt scholar at the feet of Gamaliel. Rather, there he sits, as Mary, at the feet of the same Saviour who bestowed on her the high encomium, "One thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen the good part, that shall not be taken away from her." There he sits, with thoughtful countenance and attentive mind, and listening ear, to drink in every word that falls from the Saviour's lips. There he sits, humbly at the Saviour's feet, while his eye rests placidly on that Saviour's face, as though he said, "Lord, how I love thee for all thy grace to me! Lord, what wilt thou have me to do, that I may express that warm love which glows in my breast, and exhibit the effects of that wondrous grace?" It is thus with every converted sinner. We sit at Jesus' feet, and whether he speaks himself to us in his Word, or by his servants who preach to us from that Word, or by his Spirit who applies that Word, it is all the same. Willingly we will lose no lesson, we will miss no opportunity, we will neglect no means of grace, where we expect that Jesus will manifest himself to our souls and talk to us by the way, opening to us the Scriptures. The whole of the hundred and nineteenth psalm is a commentary on this teachableness of spirit, and willingness to sit at the Master's feet; vers. 33—40 inclusive may be specially read in this connection. Down to old age we will sit at the Saviour's feet, in order to learn of him. Like Simeon, like Anna, like the picture of the righteous set before us in the ninety-second psalm, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." Now, who are they, and where are they, that flourish so? "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." And when and why do they flourish so? "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age," and "to show that the Lord is upright." We are bound to make all due allowance for the decay of nature and such weakness as is incident to the decline of life; but it is distressing to find at times the aged magnifying their infirmities as an excuse for absenting themselves from the house of God; worse still, perhaps, when they stay away without pretending any excuse. It is one of the worst signs; for none that ever truly followed the Lord in youth or in maturity ever forsook him in old age. We remember well seeing a very old man, much above ninety years of age, helped into his pew in church every sabbath; and there was the patriarchal man leaning on his staff, as he sat at Jesus' feet, a devout and venerable and earnest worshipper. Even when age may have blunted the faculties and dulled the hearing, it is still our duty to forsake not the assembling of ourselves with the people of God. We knew the case of a deaf man who, though he could not hear a word preached, came regularly to church, because, as he said, he could see to read the psalms and lessons and other parts of the service, and in any case could help the attendance by his presence and example. 4. *His place of safety was there.* This demoniac sat at Jesus' feet *for safety*. May we suppose that he had heard of the man, of whom we read in the parallel passage of another Gospel (Luke xi.), from whom the unclean spirit, having gone out, came back again with seven other spirits more wicked

than himself, and entered in and dwelt there, so that "the last state of that man was worse than the first"? At all events, he felt that there was no safety but in nearness to Christ; and this is the proper sentiment for every follower and friend of Jesus to entertain. When Peter followed Christ afar off, Peter fell. Nearness to Christ is safety, separation or distance from him is insecurity and danger. We need his grace, for by it we stand; his strength, for by it we are fortified against temptation; his blood, for by it we are cleansed, and we need a fresh application of it daily; his sacrifice, it is the ground of our acceptance, and we must look to it always; his example, it must be our daily pattern; his faith, "the life which we now live in the flesh we must live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us;" his person, "Christ in you, the hope of glory;" his presence, it is our comfort, for he has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;" his protection, that, where Satan would sift us as wheat, he may intercede for us, that our faith fail not; his love, to keep up the flame, that would otherwise burn low or go out altogether. 5. *His clothing evidence of restored sanity.* He was sitting as a scholar at Jesus' feet, as also for safety, as we have seen; he was clothed, and in his right mind, the former being, as well as his sitting, evidence of the latter. We dislike and disapprove of those naked figures which we see in books and paintings and statues; of whatever use they may be to the anatomist or painter or statuary, they are, we think, unsuitable to Christian refinement and inconsistent with Christian purity. Their usefulness to people in general is questionable. The passions of fallen humanity are bad enough of themselves, and in their own nature, without exciting them. The demoniac cured by our Lord is clothed; the sinner converted to Christ is clothed likewise. When brought to the foot of the cross, and seated at the feet of Jesus, he is clothed. He has on the "fine linen, clean and white," which is "the righteousness of saints." He is "found in Christ, not having on his own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is by the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God by faith." He has obeyed the precept, accepted the advice, feeling the benefit of the counsel, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." A practical question is here suggested. Do you, reader, possess that robe? It is put on by the hand of faith. Have you that precious faith? If not—if you have not already "good hope through grace," pray for that faith. Do not be ashamed or afraid to do so. Do not neglect or delay to ask it. Ask the Holy Spirit to work faith in your heart, and so unite you to Christ, for "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" and God gives his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. 6. *Restoration to reason.* His mind is right about sin, as "that abominable thing which God hates," and hurtful to man as hateful to God; right about Satan, "as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour"—"a murderer from the beginning;" right about the Saviour, as "the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely;" and right about holiness, as the way of happiness and the way to heaven.

IV. THE POWER THAT RESCUED THE DEMONIAK FROM WRETCHEDNESS AND RUIN. 1. *The greatness of that power.* The possession of this demoniac was something singularly shocking. It was not one demon, but many, that had made him their prey. "My name," he said, "is Legion; for we are many." The name is a Latin name, and denotes a levying or enlisting, then, a body of troops so levied. The full complement of a Roman legion was six thousand infantry, and a squadron of three hundred cavalry. Each legion was divided into ten cohorts; each cohort into three maniples; and each manipule into two centuries. Then again, when arrayed in order of battle, there were three lines—Principes, Hastati, and Triarii. What a formidable host! How powerful, and how numerous! The host and the hostility, the multitude and the enmity, the strength and the skill thus conveyed by the name here applied to the demons which had had possession of this man, are fearful to contemplate. Yet the power of Christ expelled them, mighty, multitudinous, and malicious though they were. It was the power of Christ did it all. Demons owned that power. They had faith in him, but not of the right sort; "they believed and trembled." So here they feared he was coming to judge them and consign them to torment before the time. Jesus has the self-same power still; "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." 2. *The miserable home of those demons.* They would rather go anywhere than

go home. They trembled at the power of Christ, while they dreaded the torments he will one day inflict. They would rather enter into swine, rather go into the sea, rather go into the worst and filthiest spot of earth, than go back into the deep abyss of hell. It was not the abyss of earth or the abyss of ocean, but the abysmal depth of that unfathomed pit of hell, which they so much dreaded. And oh! are sinners not afraid of rushing with eyes open into that dreadful, deep abyss? 3. *Their fiendish malice.* Now that they are cast out, and can no longer destroy their victim, they are actuated by demon-like malevolence, and try to keep others from the Saviour by causing the loss of their swine. In this way they seek to prejudice and even enrage them against the Saviour. They seem to have succeeded, for the Gadarenes "began to pray him to depart out of their coasts." 4. *The sufferings of the brute creation.* Why, it may naturally enough be asked, are poor dumb animals subjected to sufferings? Or how is it possible that the demons could exert any influence of the kind stated upon them? In reply to the latter question, it may be sufficient to mention the influence which man exerts upon animals such as the dog, the horse, the elephant, in the way of training and teaching. If animals are thus receptive of human influence, why should they not be receptive of other and, in some respects, more powerful influence? Why should they not be accessible to, and receptive of, demoniac influence, as well as that of men? The other question stands on different ground. The lower animals, placed under man's control at the first, and granted to man for useful service, share to some extent in man's varying fortunes, and are entitled to humane and kind treatment at the hands of man; but that they suffered in consequence of man's fall and sin is, we think, unquestionable. Their position now is abnormal just as man's own position is abnormal, for does not "the whole creation groan and travail in pain together until now"? Besides, they often suffer, in common with man, in special disasters—such as conflagrations, shipwrecks, and catastrophes of similar kinds. 5. *A mixture of mercy and judgment.* While mercy was shown to the demoniac in his miraculous cure, judgment was inflicted on the owners of the swine for their sin. Jesus performed the act of mercy, and permitted the exercise of the other. The demons could not have moved an inch without his permission. This side of the miracle was judgment, and well deserved. Who were these Gadarenes or Gergesenes? Were they Gentiles or were they Jews? If the former—if Gentiles, they were tempting their Jewish neighbours, and they had no right to do that. If they were Jews, they were breaking the Law of God, and they could not long expect to prosper, and to continue doing that. If they were Jewish proprietors, who employed Gentile swineherds for the purpose of tending and herding their swine, they were both sinning themselves and tempting others to sin; and so both partook of the result and shared the consequences of their crime. Here, too, we must notice the hardening effect of sin long persevered in. These Gadarenes, whatever their nationality, whether Jew or Gentile, had become like swine themselves—swinish in spirit and disposition. They actually preferred their swine to the Saviour, and "besought him to depart out of their coasts!"—J. J. G.

Vers. 21—43. Parallel passages: Matt. ix. 18—26; Luke viii. 41—56.—*Touching in the throng.* I. THE WOMAN WITH AN ISSUE OF BLOOD. 1. *A painful disease.* The woman mentioned in this section had been a sorely afflicted sufferer. For twelve long and weary years she had suffered from a painful and weakening malady (*ἐν πόσει*, the preposition *ἐν* here resembles the *beth essentie* of Hebrew, denoting in the capacity, character, or condition of, *i.e.* in the condition of an issue). During that time, we may well suppose, she had sought every means of cure; and found none. During that time she had applied to various physicians; but obtained no relief. During that time she had, no doubt, taken many a bitter draught and many a nauseous drug; but all to no purpose. During that time she had, doubtless, submitted to many severe experiments or even some harsh operations; but all in vain. During that time she had expended much, yea, all her means; she "had spent," we are told, "all her living upon physicians," and that *in addition* to her sufferings, as is implied by the prepositional element in the word (*προσπαλάσασα*) employed by St. Luke; while St. Mark tells us plainly in this passage that she "had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had." And now she remains poor and destitute, diseased and weak, and miserable as ever; for she "was

nothing bettered, but rather *grew worse*;" "neither could be healed of any." What is she now to do? Where is she to seek relief? To whom can she further go? Is there any application she can yet make? Or is there any remedy still remaining to be tried? 2. *One resource yet remains.* She has tried all the physicians; she has tried all means of cure that have been prescribed, or suggested, or that she has ever heard of; she has, besides, spent her all in quest of health. Still one, and only one, remains to be tried. She has heard of a wondrous Man who goes about continually, doing good; she has been told of most wonderful cures he has effected; of diseases, previously deemed incurable, which he has healed; of sufferers whom, when all else failed, he has relieved. She has never seen him, it is true—she has only heard of him; but what of that? Though she has not seen him, she has no reason to doubt the reports she has heard of him; she has no reason to doubt the greatness of his power and the might of his mercy, in accordance with these reports; she believes the accuracy of these reports, she has somehow confidence in their correctness. She has schooled herself into faith in his power to effect her cure and heal her disease.

3. *Obstacles to be overcome.* A difficulty here presents itself. Her disease is peculiar—such a one as she is loth to name in public. She cannot bring herself to talk of it in presence of so many people; womanly delicacy forbids her. Besides, it was such a disease as caused ceremonial uncleanness, so that her contact was polluting. People would, not without reason, upbraid her for coming among them, or thrust her away from them, as impure and contaminating.

4. *A happy thought.* A happy thought occurred to her in her difficult position—a thought which we may regard at once as the outcome of strong faith, and the suggestion of deep affliction. It flashed on her mind as a bright idea. She had heard that the great Physician, to whom her thoughts now turned, often accomplished his cures and conferred health by a touch. She naturally infers that if she could but touch him even stealthily, her cure would be effected. Accordingly she conceived the thought of stealing a cure; she thought within herself, "If I may touch but his clothes," or his garment, or even the border of it, "I shall be whole."

5. *Pressure of the crowd.* Our Lord at this time was on his way to the house of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, in order to cure his daughter. The crowd that followed him on the occasion was unusually large. It was drawn together by respect for the distinguished official whose daughter was so ill, as also by the remembrance of past miracles, and the prospect of seeing the performance of another. Dense as the crowd was, she kept to her purpose, pressing onward through it, and elbowing her way till she had got up to his very side.

6. *The cure effected, but concealment impossible.* She attains her object; she touches the hem of his garment, and all at once—strange circumstance! blessed relief!—the malady of many years' standing is healed, the issue is stanchied, the pain and grief have ceased. But a disquieting circumstance still remains; a matter of some uneasiness has now to be got over. She is cured, it is true, but she is struck with terror at her own temerity; she is filled with alarm when she sees Jesus looking round inquisitively (*περιβλένεν*, imperfect, equivalent to "he kept looking all round"), and hears him earnestly asking those about him, "Who touched me?" She knew that her touch was polluting; she was well aware that it conveyed ceremonial defilement. She had, indeed, only touched the hem—the extreme border of his garment, as if in hope that so slight a touch would defile him but little, while it might benefit her so much.

7. *Astonishment of the bystanders.* The persons next our Lord in the crowd were amazed at the question; some would be disposed to say in reply, "All touched thee," and others, again, would be inclined to think and to say, when they gave expression to their thought, "None touched thee." At length, after all had denied, Peter as usual, acting as spokesman of the disciples, said, "Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee [*συνθλίβοντα*, equivalent to 'pressing greatly, or pressing upon on every side'], and sayest thou, Who touched me?" "Not so," says our Lord; "all the persons in this large crowd do indeed throng and press around me, and yet but one touched me—'somebody touched me.'" 8. *Surprising graciousness of the Saviour.* Our Lord looked round to discover the one individual in all that crowd who had touched him. At last his eye rested on the abashed, affrighted woman; when, lo! instead of a rebuke for her temerity, instead of a sharp reproof for her audacity, instead of a harsh reprimand for her polluting touch, instead of blaming her for her presumption, instead of a single unkind expression of any sort, he commends

her faith, confirms her cure, ratifies her desire, and gladdens her heart by these most gracious words, "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."

II. THE PECULIARITY OF THIS WOMAN'S TOUCH. 1. *There must be contact.* The first thing we are taught by it is that, in coming to Christ and in seeking cure from him, there must be not merely *contiguity* but actual *contact*, and that of a peculiar kind. All the persons in the great crowd that followed our Lord on this occasion were near him comparatively, some were quite close to him; yet only one derived benefit from him. There were, moreover, several, we can scarcely doubt, in that multitude who needed some temporal boon or spiritual blessing; yet only one obtained such a blessing. There were numbers of persons all around and on every side of him; yet virtue proceeded from him only in one direction. Not only so; *mere contact itself* is not sufficient. Intelligent connection—special and spiritual contact—is needed. There were many crowding on and crushing our Saviour, yet only one touched him in the true and proper sense. The motives that moved that multitude were various. Some were borne thoughtlessly along with the mass of persons that formed the procession; they went with the crowd. Others, and perhaps the major part, were attracted by curiosity—they were desirous of seeing some miracle; or they had itching ears, and hoped to hear some startling statement. Others, again, were, no doubt, drawn into the crowd by feelings of admiration for the Saviour. While various motives thus actuated the individuals that composed that crowd—the units that made up that multitude; only one, it would seem, was influenced by the right motive; only one approached the Saviour in the right way; only one at that time was healed. 2. *Her feelings and her faith.* That one individual felt the misery of her condition, the iron had entered deeply into her soul; that one felt intensely her need of health. That one, besides, had resolved to overcome every obstacle in order to obtain relief. That one, also, was fully persuaded that Christ could confer health and cure. Nay, she felt assured that, as he frequently touched the persons cured by him, a touch of his person, or even of his clothes, or if it were but of the border of his garment or of the fringe of his robe, would make her whole. Now, here was *faith*—true faith, strong faith; and this faith it was that made the difference between her touch and that of the crowd that pressed upon him—between the multitude that *thronged* him and the woman that *touched* him. Others touched him, but their touch was incidental; hers was intentional. Others touched him, but it was owing to the pressure around; hers was from a deliberate purpose within. Others touched him, not feeling any need of help at his hand, or, if they felt any need, yet not expecting any relief in that way; she touched him, conscious of her malady and convinced of his power to effect her cure. Others touched him, but then it was curiosity, chance as the world calls it, the crowd, the multitude, the pressure that brought them into such close proximity to Christ; she touched him, but it was the result of deliberation on her part, design, earnest purpose, strong desire, anxious hope of cure, and confident expectation of deliverance. There was thus all the difference in the world between the thronging of that multitude and the touching of that invalid. Faith is thus seen to be the means of union with Christ, and union not mechanical and physical, but union rational and spiritual. We may approach him by ceremonies, by profession, by lifeless prayers, by dead works; but in none of these cases do we really touch him: and not coming into living contact with him, we cannot expect to be recognized by him. 3. *An example worth imitation.* We may profit by the example of this poor invalid woman as contrasted with that great crowd. We cannot agree with those who disapprove of thronging the Saviour, while they approve of touching him. We approve of both. It is good to be in the throng that crowds round Christ, if only one should be healed at a time, for you yourself may be that one, while all that are far from him shall perish. It is good to be near the pool of Bethesda, for some one is sure to be cured every time the angel troubles the waters, and you yourself may be the happy individual. It is good to wait at the posts of wisdom's door, for that is the way of duty, and the way of duty is the way of safety. But while it is good to be in the crowd that throngs Christ, it is better—far better to touch Christ. There must be real union—complete connection with Christ. The electric telegraph, one of the greatest wonders of a marvellous age—those wonderful wires that pass over lands and under seas, connecting Ireland with Britain, and Briain

with the Continent, and one continent with another; that link the Old World with the New, flashing its messages over more than half the globe, thus facilitating the intercommunion of nations, and expediting the exchange of intelligence from East to West and from West to East;—if those electric wires stretched from one place on the earth's surface to another hundreds of miles remote, and if they reached very near to that other place, just within a yard, or a foot, or an inch, and yet stopped short by that small interval; no communion could be carried on, and no intelligence conveyed. Its hundreds of miles of extent would be unavailing; that yard, or foot, or inch would render the whole useless, and cause all the labour to be lost. It might as well stretch only three-fourths of the way, or one-half the way, or one quarter of the way, or no part of the way at all. Nothing short of a close and complete uniting of the two places, and that without any interval, will do. Alas! how many come close up to Christ, but never close with him. How many are in the throng that never touch him! How many there are like the young man in the Gospel—that amiable young man whom our Lord loved, who did so much, and went so far, and yet after all came short! They seem to be very close to Christ, and very near his cross; but there is one link wanting—"One thing thou lackest." How many are at the very threshold of the kingdom of heaven, and ready to say with Agrippa, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian;" and yet they never cross the threshold, nor enter the kingdom, nor become Christians, in the true and proper sense, at all! How many are on the spot at the very time when Christ is passing by, without ever touching so much as the fringe of his garment! How many frequent the place where his presence is promised and his blessing bestowed; and yet they never feel the one nor enjoy the other! There is nourishment in food, but you must partake of it; or the most wholesome food will do you no good and give you no strength. There is sweetness in music, but you must have an ear for it and give ear to it; else the sweetest music will be but mere noise—an empty sound. There is fragrance in the rose, but your olfactory nerves must be sound and sufficiently near the odoriferous flower; or its fragrance will be wasted on desert air! The electric current is a potent agency, as we have seen, but it must needs have the electric wire to pass along; or it loses its practical utility. In view of such facts and considerations, our duty as well as interest is, by grace, to realize union with Christ; we should give no sleep to our eyes, nor slumber to our eyelids, until by grace, through faith, we are united to Christ, and one with him—Christ in us and we in Christ, Christ our life, and our life devoted to Christ. For while Christ is able to save, and waiting and willing to save, and while God sent his Son to seek and save that which was lost; yet there must be faith, or we cannot be saved. Let us, therefore, seek the aid of God's Holy Spirit, that he may form the link of faith between our soul and the Saviour; or, if it already exist, that he may strengthen and brighten it. 4. *How healing virtue is obtainable from Christ.* There was healing power in the Saviour—inherent in him, in him alone, and in none besides. This poor invalid drew it forth by the touch of faith. The virtue to heal that proceeded from Christ may be compared to the electric current, while the faith of the woman may be likened to the wires along which it passed. Now, if faith be the gift of God, as it is, and the operation of his Spirit, as we know from his Word, it may be asked, "Why blame any for the want of it?" We do not, and cannot with fairness, blame for want of it; but we may blame persons for not asking it, for not wishing for it, for not seeking it, or for not accepting it. If God gave his Son before you asked him, and without your asking him, "will he not with him also freely give you all things;" in other words, will he not give you faith in him for the asking? If he have given the greater gift, will he withhold or refuse the less? If he has promised his Spirit to them that ask him, and if he invites us and presses us to ask him, do we not tempt God when we refuse to ask him, seeing it is the Spirit that works faith in the heart of man? We are far, very far, from ignoring or overlooking the sovereign grace of God, whereby he takes one out of a city, and two out of a family, and brings them to Zion: but if we refuse the course that God has prescribed to us; if we reject the conditions on which he offers grace and every mercy; if we neglect the ordinances where he has appointed to meet and bless us, or if, attending them, we forget the object for which we are urged to attend them, or if we use the means without thinking of the great end we should have in view, or if we are not at pains to examine our motives, or if we have no care to meet Christ in his ordinances,

no longing for his presence, no thirsting for his grace, no hungering for his righteousness, no earnest inquiry, "What must we do to be saved?" and no seeking of the fulfilment of the promises;—in all such, or any such cases, are we not thronging Christ instead of touching him? If custom, or curiosity, or the crowd, or habit, or respectability, or worldly advantage, or early training, brings us near to Christ, and if we have no higher object and no holier end in view, are we not thronging Christ, and yet not touching Christ? "Many," we know from the declaration of God's own Word, "will say, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then," adds the Saviour, "will I profess unto them, I never knew you." What was all this more or better than thronging Christ without touching him? 5. *Confession consequent on cure.* She sought Christ privately, but was obliged to confess publicly. So with ourselves; we must confess his name before men, and tell of the gracious Saviour we have found; just as the psalmist says, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." "With the heart men believe unto righteousness, and with the mouth make confession unto salvation." 6. *Character of the cure.* The cure was immediate; "from that hour." It was complete; the fountain was staunch. It was perpetual; "Be thou whole." This our Lord probably added lest she should think the cure too sudden to continue, too speedy to last, too good news to be true. Not so; it was no transient remedy, no mere temporary relief. All that God does is well done; he does not leave any part of his work unfinished. Having "begun a good work in us, he will perform [rather, *perfect*] it till the day of Jesus Christ." The testimony to the Saviour's work on earth was that "he hath done all things well." 7. *Peculiarity of expression.* The words *εἰς εἰρήνην* are properly "into peace," which refer more to the future than to the present. Peace is not only the present element in which she finds herself, but the future sphere in which her life is to move. Brought into peace by the great Peacemaker, she is ever after to continue therein. The addition of the words *τοῦ θύτου* was not superfluous, but most reassuring, in order to ratify the stolen cure and to convince her of its durability and permanence. Further, we may notice the relation of the *πίστις* of the woman to the *δύναμις* of the Saviour. The former saved her *mediately*, or instrumentally, that is, as the connecting link between herself and Christ; the latter was the healing power of Christ, which, working along the line of that faith, saved her as the *energetic* and efficient cause.

III. THE RESTORATION TO LIFE OF JAIRUS'S DAUGHTER. 1. *Position of Jairus.* The official position of Jairus was highly respectable. He was ruler of the synagogue. Though there is some difference of opinion on the subject, yet the officers of the synagogue appear to have been the following:—(1) The ruler or president of the synagogue, on whom devolved the right ordering and regulation of the service, and with whom were conjoined the elders; (2) the *sheliach tsibbor*, the angel or messenger of the congregation, who offered up the public prayers, and who acted as secretary to conduct the correspondence, or to serve as deputy, when required, between one synagogue and another; (3) the *chazzan* (*ὀψοπόρις*), or ordinary reader, who read the appointed portions, or who handed the book to an occasional reader; he also had charge of the sacred books; (4) the *didakos*, or sexton. 2. *The substantial harmony of the narratives.* The ruler of the synagogue, according to St. Mark, tells our Lord that his daughter (*ἐκχθρὸς ἔχει*) is extremely ill, "at the point of death"—in fact, *in extremis*; according to St. Matthew, that (*ἔπι ἐτελεύτησεν*) she is dead by this time—"even now dead;" she was so ill when he left that he did not now expect to see her again alive when he returned; according to St. Luke, that (*ἀπέθνησκει*) she was dying, or "lay a dying;"—all perfectly consistent. 3. *The special tenderness of the parent.* Though St. Mark very frequently employs diminutives with little, if any, difference from the simpler form, yet we see good reason for his use of the diminutive *θυγάτριον* here. It becomes a term of special endearment and affectionate tenderness in this place, from the circumstance, of which another evangelist, St. Luke, apprises us, namely, that this little girl was an *only* daughter (*θυγάτηρ μονογενής*), perhaps, indeed most probably, an only child. We can easily imagine the terrible uneasiness of the father, when our Lord had been delayed by the unwelcome incident of the cure of the woman with the bloody issue. Jairus must have looked on this as a most provoking and unpleasant interruption; and now that the messengers bring word that his daughter is dead, and so his worst fears

realized, he and they evidently give up all for lost. The great Healer might have restored her to health, however ill, or however far gone she might have been; but how can he restore her to life now that she is dead? 4. *Jesus' power over death.* He had heard, or, if we read a compound of the same word, though slightly supported (*παρακούσας*), he had overheard the conversation between the messengers and Jairus; he had heard them dissuade the ruler from fatiguing with the length of the journey, or in any other way worrying the Physician (*σκόλλεις*, root *σκόλον*, spoils, means "to spoil, despoil, flay, trouble, harass, or worry"), as it was only bootless labour—quite useless work—for the child was dead. Our Lord tried to revive the father's hopes, encourage his fainting heart, and strengthen his weak faith, saying, "Do not be afraid, only believe." The mourners, especially the hired mourners, who were making so much ado, and beating themselves (*ἐκόπτοντο*), in grief more seeming than sincere, began to deride our Lord, or laugh him down (*κατεγέλων*). In fact, they did not wish her restored, lest perhaps their occupation would be gone. Taking the maiden by the hand, he addressed her, in the vernacular Aramaic of the district, saying, "*Talitha cumi*, Maid, arise." Straightway she arose and *walked*; her motion proved strength, and strength and motion belong to life; and so death, after all, is a sleep, from which the Saviour brings awakening. His power over every stage of death appears by the restoration of one just departed as this maiden; of one being carried out to burial, as the son of the widow of Nain; of one already in the grave four days, as Lazarus. 5. *Practical character of our Lord.* When Simon's mother-in-law was cured, she turned to her domestic duties; when this young girl of twelve years of age was restored, she walked about (*περιπατεῖ*)—how natural! When others wondered, Jesus thought of the keen appetite of the young girl, and ordered her *food*.—J. J. G.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1.—Our Lord now left the neighbourhood of Capernaum, and came into his own country, the district of Nazareth, where he had been, not born indeed, but brought up, and where his kinsfolk after the flesh still lived. Nazareth would be about a day's journey from Capernaum. This was not the first public exercise of his ministry at Nazareth. Of that and its results St. Luke gives us the account (iv. 16). It would seem reasonable to suppose that, after the fame which he had now acquired, he should again visit the place where he had been brought up. His sisters were still living there. St. Mark here again uses the historical present *ἔρχεται*, "he cometh," for which there is better authority than for *ἦλθεν*. His disciples follow him. Only the chosen three had been with him in the house of Jairus. The presence of the whole body of the disciples would be valuable at Nazareth.

Ver. 2.—As usual, he made the sabbath the special time for his teaching. And many hearing him were astonished. They were astonished at the ability, the sublimity, the holiness of his teaching, as well as at the signs and wonders by which he confirmed it. "Many" hearing him; not all. Some listened with faith; but "the many" (there is some authority for *οἱ πολλοί*) were envious of him. Whence hath this man these things? The expression, "this man," is repeated, according to the best authorities in the next

clause, What is the wisdom that is given (not "unto him," but) unto this man? There is a contemptuous tone about the expression.

Ver. 3.—Is not this the carpenter? St. Matthew (xiii. 55) says, "the carpenter's son." We infer from this that our Lord actually worked at the trade of a carpenter, and probably continued to do so until he entered upon his public ministry. We may also infer that Joseph was now no longer living, otherwise it would have been natural for his name to have been mentioned here. According to St. Chrysostom, our Lord made ploughs and yokes for oxen. Certainly, he often drew his similitudes from these things. "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 62). "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me" (Matt. xi. 29). Christ was the son of a carpenter. Yes; but he was also the Son of him who made the world at his will. Yea, he himself made the world. "All things were made by him," the Eternal Word. And he made them for us, that we might judge of the Maker by the greatness of his work. He chose to be the son of a carpenter. If he had chosen to be the son of an emperor, then men might have ascribed his influence to the circumstances of his birth. But he chose a humble and obscure condition, for this, among other reasons, that it might be acknowledged that it was his divinity that transformed the world. Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary,

and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? Some have thought that these were literally brethren of our Lord, sons of Joseph and Mary. Others have considered that they were his legal half-brothers, sons of Joseph by a former marriage. This view is held by many of the Greek Fathers, and has something to recommend it. But, on the whole, the most probable opinion is that they were cousins of our Lord—sons of a sister of the Virgin Mary, also called Mary, the wife of Cleophas, Clopas, or Alphaeus. There is evidence that there were four sons of Clopas and Mary, whose names were James, and Joses, and Simon (or Symeon), and Judas. Mary the wife of Clopas is mentioned by St. Matthew (xxvii. 56) as the mother of James the Less and of Joses. Jude describes himself (Jude 5) as the brother of James; and Simon, or Symeon, is mentioned in Eusebius as the son of Clopas. It must be remembered also that the word ἀδελφός, like the Hebrew word which it expresses, means not only “a brother,” but generally “a near kinsman.” In the same way the “sisters” would be cousins of our Lord. According to a tradition recorded by Nicephorus (ii. 3), the names of these sisters or cousins were Esther and Tamar. And they were offended in him. They took it ill that one brought up amongst them as a carpenter should set himself up as a prophet and a teacher; just as there are those in every age who are apt to take it amiss if they see any one spring from a trade into the doctor’s chair. But these Nazarenes knew not that Jesus was the Son of God, who of his great love for man vouchsafed to take a low estate, that he might redeem us, and teach us humility by his example. And thus this humility and love of Christ, which ought to have excited their admiration and respect, was a stumbling-block to them, because they could not receive it, or believe that God was willing thus to humble himself.

Ver. 4.—A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, etc. One reason for this is that it is almost natural for persons to hold of less account than they ought, those with whom they have been brought up and have lived on familiar terms. Prophets are commonly least regarded, and often most envied, in their own country. However unworthy may be the feeling, the inhabitants of a district, or members of a community, do not like to see one of themselves put above them, more especially a junior over a senior, or a man of humble origin over a man well born. But it should be remembered that God abhors the envious, and will withhold the wonders of his grace from those who grudge his gifts to others. The men of Nazareth, when they saw Christ

eating, and drinking, and sleeping, and working at his trade, like others, despised him when he claimed respect and reverence as a Prophet, and especially because his relations according to the flesh were of humble condition; and Joseph more particularly, whom they supposed to be his real father, for they could not imagine or believe that he was born of a virgin, and had God alone for his Father.

Vers. 5, 6.—And he could there do no mighty work. This is a remarkable expression. *He could do no mighty work there.* The words imply want of power—that in some sense or other he was unable to do it. He did indeed perform some miracles. He laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them; but he wrought none of his greater miracles there. Of course, even these less striking miracles ought to have sufficed. In a miracle there must be the suspension of some known law of nature; and one clear instance of such suspension ought to be as conclusive as a hundred. Then it must be remembered that it is not God’s method in his dealings with his creatures to force conviction upon them when the ordinary means prove insufficient. For men’s actions must be free if they are to be made the test of judgment, and they would not be free if God constrained men to obey his will. The men of Nazareth had sufficient evidence had they not chosen to be blinded, and a greater amount of evidence would only have increased their condemnation. So their unbelief thwarted his purposes of mercy, and he went in and out amongst them like one hampered and disabled, marvelling at their unbelief, or rather marveling because of their unbelief (διὰ τὴν ἀπιστίαν αὐτῶν). The condition of mind of these Nazarenes was what caused amazement to the Saviour. At length he turned away from Nazareth, never, so far as we know, to visit it again; for this was their second opportunity, and the second occasion on which they deliberately rejected him. What, however, they refused he immediately offered to others. He was not discouraged. He went round about the villages teaching.

Ver. 7.—At ch. iii. 7 we had the account of our Lord’s selection of the twelve. Here we find the notice of their being first sent forth. Their names have already been recorded. He gave them authority—mark the imperfect (ἐδίδον)—over unclean spirits. St. Matthew (x. 1) adds, “and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.” But St. Mark here fixes the attention upon the great central object of Christ’s mission—to contend against evil in every form, and especially to grapple with Satan in his stronghold in the hearts of men.

Ver. 8.—They should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only. St. Matthew says (x. 10), according to the best authorities (*μηδὲ ράβδον*), they were not to take a staff. St. Luke says the same as St. Matthew. The meaning is that they were not to make any special provision for their journey, but to go forth just as they were, depending upon God. Those who had a staff might use it; those who had not one were not to trouble themselves to procure one. The scrip (*πήρα*) was the wallet for food. They were to take no money in their purse (*μη εἰς τὴν ζώνην χαλκόν*); literally, *brass in their girdle*. St. Mark, writing for Romans, uses this word for money. St. Luke, writing for Greeks, uses the term (*ἀργύριον*) “silver.” St. Matthew (x. 9) says, “provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass.”

Ver. 9.—But be shod with sandals. This is quite consistent with what St. Matthew says (x. 9), that they were not to provide themselves with shoes (*μηδὲ ὑποδήματα*). According to St. Matthew, shoes are forbidden directly; according to St. Mark, they are forbidden by implication, where he says that they were to be shod with sandals. Shoes are here forbidden which cover the whole foot, not sandals which only protect the soles of the feet lest they should be injured by the rocky ground. The soil of Judæa was rocky and rough, and the climate hot. The sandals therefore protected the soles of the feet, and yet, being open above, kept the feet more cool, and therefore fit for the journey. It is worthy of our notice that, after our Lord's ascension, we find St. Peter using sandals when the angel, who delivered him out of prison, said to him (Acts xii. 8), “Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals.”

Ver. 10.—There abide, till ye depart thence. They were not to change their lodgings in any place. This direction was given to them, lest, if they did, they might appear to be fickle and restless; or lest they might hurt the feelings of those with whom they had first lodged. And they were not to stay too long anywhere, lest they should be burdensome to any.

Ver. 11.—Shake off the dust (*τὸν χεῖρ*)—literally, *the soil*—that is under your feet. St. Matthew and St. Luke use the word (*κοινοῦν*) “dust.” A very significant action. The dust was shaken off as an evidence of the toil and labour of the apostles in journeying to them. It witnessed that they had entered the city and had delivered message, and that their message had been refused. The very dust, therefore, of the place was a defilement to them. “It shall be more tolerable,” etc. This clause is omitted by the best authorities; it was probably copied from St. Matthew.

Ver. 12.—They preached that men should

repent. This was their great work, to which the miracles were subordinate.

Ver. 13.—And anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them. It is hardly possible to separate this from the reference to the use of oil for the sick, in Jas. v. 14. Unction was employed extensively in ancient times for medicinal purposes. It is recorded of Herod the Great by Josephus (*Antiq.* xvii. 6, 5) that in one of his sicknesses he was “immersed in a bath full of oil,” from which he is said to have derived much benefit. The apostles used it, no doubt not only on account of its supposed remedial virtues, but also as an outward and visible sign that the healing was effected by their instrumentality in the name of Christ, and perhaps also because the oil itself was significant of God's mercy, of spiritual comfort and joy—“the oil of gladness.” Neither this passage nor that in St. James can properly be adduced to support the ceremony of “extreme unction;” for in both these cases the result was that the sick were restored to health. The so-called sacrament of “extreme unction” is administered immediately before death, when the sick person is *in articulo mortis*.

Ver. 14.—This Herod is called by St. Matthew (xiv. 1) “the tetrarch;” and so also by St. Luke (ix. 7); though it should be noticed that St. Matthew, in the same context, at ver. 9, calls him “king.” The word “tetrarch” properly means the sovereign or ruler of the fourth part of a territory. He is known as Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, who had appointed him “tetrarch” of Galilee and Peræa. Herod Antipas had married the daughter of Aretas, King of Arabia, but deserted her for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. John the Baptist is risen from the dead; that is, “is risen in the person of Jesus Christ.” St. Luke (ix. 7) says that at first Herod was “much perplexed (*διηπόρει*)” about him. At length, however, as he heard more and more of the fame of Christ's miracles, he came to the conclusion that our Lord was none other than John the Baptist risen again. Such is the opinion of St. Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and others. At that time the views of Pythagoras respecting the transmigration of souls were generally current, and probably influenced the troubled mind of Herod. He had put to death an innocent and holy man; and it is a high testimony to the worth of the Baptist that, under the reproaches of a guilty conscience, Herod should have come to the conclusion that he had risen from the dead, thus probably giving the lie to his own opinions as a Sadducee; and terrified lest the Baptist should now

avenge his own murder. "What a great thing," exclaims St. Chrysostom, "is virtue! for Herod fears him, even though dead." It should not be forgotten that this is the same Herod who set Jesus at nought and mocked him, when Pilate sent him to him, in the hope of relieving himself of the terrible responsibility of condemning one whom he knew to be innocent.

Ver. 17.—In prison. Josephus ('Antiq.' xviii. 5, 2) informs us that this prison was the fort of Macharue, on the confines of Galilee and Arabia, and that there John was beheaded. Herod's father had built a magnificent palace within that fort; and so he may have been keeping the anniversary of his birthday there.

Vers. 18, 19.—For John said unto Herod. The Greek tense (*ἔλεγε*) implies more than the simple expression, "he said;" it implies a repeated warning. We learn from St. Matthew (xiv. 5) that Herod would have killed John before, but he feared the people. Here St. Mark says that Herodias set herself against him, and desired to kill him; and she could not; for Herod feared John. There is no contradiction between the two evangelists. The case appears to have been this: that at first Herod desired to put John to death, because John had reproved him on account of Herodias. But by degrees John gained an influence over Herod by the force of his character, and by his holy life and teaching.

Ver. 20.—The words in the Authorized Version are, When he heard him, he did many things (*πολλὰ ἐποίησεν*), and heard him gladly. But according to the best authorities the reading should be (*πολλὰ ἠπόρει*), *he was much perplexed*. In St. Luke, as stated above, we have (*διηπόρει*), "he was much perplexed." Nor is there any inconsistency in the next clause in St. Mark, if we accept this reading. Herod was not utterly depraved. There was to him a charm, not only in the character, but in the discourses of John the Baptist. But he was an inconsistent man, and was continually the victim of a conflict between the good and the evil within him, in which evil, alas! triumphed. Herodias, on the other hand, had always wished to get rid of John, as the stern and uncompromising reprove of her adultery and incest; and so at length she persuaded Herod to give way. "For," says Bede, "she feared lest Herod should at length repent, and yield to the exhortations of John, and dissolve this unreal marriage, and restore Herodias to her lawful husband."

Ver. 22.—The words should run thus: And when the daughter of Herodias herself came in (*καὶ εἰσελεύσθης τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτῆς τῆς Ἡρωδιάδος*). The intention of the

evangelist is to point out that it was Herodias's own daughter who danced, and not a mere professional dancing-girl. Josephus mentions that dancing-women were admitted to feasts by the Jews; and Xenophon testifies to the same custom amongst the Greeks.

Ver. 24.—And she went out, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? (*τί αἰτήσωμαι*;)—according to the best authorities (*τί αἰτήσωμαι*); *What should I ask?*

Ver. 25.—I will that thou forthwith give me in a charger (*ἐν πλυναρί*) the head of John the Baptist. John the Baptist seems to have had a presentiment of his speedy end when he said, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Ver. 26.—And the king was exceedingly sorry. We cannot suppose that this was a pretended grief. The true reason is doubtless to be found in the relentless animosity of Herodias. Herod must have known well that he could not be bound by his oath in reference to a petition so unreasonable and so iniquitous. Nevertheless he thought that "the words of a king were law." St. Augustine says, "The girl dances; the mother rages. A rash oath is made amidst the excitement and the voluptuous indulgence of the feast; and the savage desires of Herodias are fulfilled." For the sake of his oaths (*διὰ τοὺς ὅρκους*); the plural shows that he repeated the rash promise once and again.

Ver. 27.—He sent forth an executioner (*σπεκουλάτωρα*); literally, a soldier of his guard; one of his body-guard, in constant attendance as messenger or executioner. It is a Roman word from *speculari*, to watch. St. Jerome relates that when the head of the Baptist was brought, Herodias barbarously thrust the tongue through with a bodkin, as Fulvia is said to have done over and over again, the tongue of Cicero; thus verifying what Cicero had once said while living, that "nothing is more revengeful than a woman." Because they could not bear to hear the truth, therefore they bored through with a bodkin the tongue that had spoken the truth.

Ver. 29.—The taking up of the corpse by the disciples would seem to intimate that it lay uncared for and unburied until the disciples showed their respect for it. Josephus says that after the beheading, the mutilated remains were cast out of the prison and left neglected. God's judgments at length found out Herod. For not long after this he was defeated by Aretas in a great battle, and put to an ignominious flight. Herodias herself and Herod were banished by a decree of the Roman Senate to Lyons, where they both perished miserably; and Nicephorus relates that Salome, the daughter of Herodias, died by a remarkable visitation. She fell

through some treacherous ice over which she was passing, and fell through it in such a manner that her head was caught while the rest of her body sank into the water, and thus it came to pass that in her efforts to save herself her head was nearly severed by the sharp edges of the broken ice.

Ver. 30.—The narrative, which had been interrupted by this parenthesis relating to John the Baptist, is now taken up again. The apostles. This is the only place where St. Mark calls them apostles. In the parallel passage, St. Luke (ix. 10) says that they told him all that they had done. St. Mark adds, with more detail, and whatsoever (*ὅσα*) they had taught. They gave him a full account of their mission.

Ver. 31.—Our Lord cared for his disciples. They required rest after the labour and excitement of their ministry; and it was impossible to find the needful refreshment and repose where they were so thronged by the multitude.

Ver. 32.—And they went away in the boat (*τῇ πλοῇ*) to a desert place apart—the boat, no doubt, which our Lord had ordered to be always in attendance upon him. We learn from St. Luke (ix. 10) that this desert place was near to “a city called Bethsaida.” It seems that there were two places called Bethsaida—one in Galilee proper, and the other to the north-east of the Sea of Galilee. It was to the neighbourhood of this latter place that our Lord here directs the boat to take him. The other Bethsaida is mentioned lower down at ver. 45. The word Bethsaida means the “fish village.”

Ver. 33.—This is very graphic. The Greek in the first part of this verse runs thus, according to the best authorities: *Καὶ εἶδον αὐτοὺς ὑπάγοντας, καὶ ἐπύγνασαν αὐτὸν πολλοί*. And they—i.e. the people—saw them going, and many knew them. They saw them departing, and observed what direction the boat took, and then hastened thither on foot, and outwent them; and so were ready to meet them again on the opposite shore when they landed. The distance by land from the place where they started would be about twenty miles.

Ver. 34.—Our Lord had gone to this desert place for retirement and rest; but finding the multitude waiting for him, his compassions were stirred, and he began to teach them many things. He was moved with compassion, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd. No animal is more helpless, more stupid, more in need of a shepherd, than the sheep. St. Chrysostom observes that the scribes were not so much pastors as wolves, because, by teaching errors both by word and by example, they perverted the minds of the simple.

Ver. 35.—And when the day was now far

spent. The English, like the Greek, is here very idiomatic (*καὶ ἤδη ἔσας πολλὰς γενόμενης*). The English is retained in the Revised Version as it came through the Authorized Version from Tyndale. The present participle *γενόμενης* appears in the Sinaitic Manuscript and in the Cambridge Codex. His disciples came unto him, and said. The best reading is (*καὶ ἔλεγον*), and were saying. St. Matthew (xiv. 16) says, “They need not depart; give ye them to eat.” Thus our Lord prepared the way for his miracle. He detained the multitude till the day was far spent, so that the disciples might be induced to pray him to dismiss them. This would open the way for him to direct the disciples to feed them. And thus the miracle would appear all the more evident in proportion as they found themselves in a strait, and utterly destitute of the needful supplies of food for such a multitude in the desert. St. John’s account here is much more full. He tells us (vi. 5) that Jesus, addressing Philip, said, “Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat?” And he adds, “This he said to prove him; for he himself knew what he would do.” Our Lord, it would seem, asked Philip rather than the others, because Philip was simple-minded, sincere, and teachable, rather than clever, and so was accustomed to ask things which appeared plain to others. We have an instance of this simplicity of mind in the question which he asks (John xiv. 8), “Lord show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.”

Ver. 37.—Two hundred pennyworth of bread. The penny, or “denarius,” was the chief Roman silver coin, worth about eightpence halfpenny. Upon the breaking up of the Roman empire, the states which arose upon its ruins imitated the coinage of the old imperial mints, and in general called their principal silver coin the “denarius.” Thus the denarius found its way into this country through the Angle-Saxons, and it was for a long period the only coin. Hence the introduction of the word into the Authorized Version. Two hundred pennyworth would be of the value of nearly seven pounds. But considering the constant fluctuation in the relation between money and the commodities purchased by money, it is in vain to inquire what number of leaves the same two hundred denarii would purchase at that time, although it was evidently the representation of a large supply of bread.

Ver. 38.—Five (loaves), and two fishes. St. John tells us (vi. 9) that the loaves were of barley, and that the fishes were small (*ὀψῖδια*); St. Mark says *δύο ἰχθύες*. Barley bread was considered an inferior and homely kind of food, very inferior to bread made of wheat flour. The comparative

value of the two kinds of bread is given in Rev. vi. 6. "A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny." The psalmist alludes to the greater excellence of wheat flour; "He would have fed them also with the finest wheat flour" (Ps. lxxxi. 16).

Ver. 39.—All were to sit down by companies (*συντάβια συντάβια*)—St. Luke (ix. 14) says that the companies were about fifty each (*ἀνὰ πεντήκοντα*)—upon the green grass. St. John says (vi. 10) that "there was much grass in the place." This indicates the time of the year. The grass was growing, and it was green. It would not be green in that district after April. Thus St. Mark's account of the state of the grass at that time (an account evidently repeated from an eye-witness) coincides with the account of St. John, who says that "the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was at hand" (vi. 4).

Ver. 40.—And they sat down in ranks (*ἀνέστανον πρᾶσι πρᾶσι*); literally, *they reclined*. The Greek word *πρᾶσι* means "a garden plot" or "bed," literally, a *bed of leaves*. They were disposed symmetrically. Probably the English word "ranks" expresses the meaning as clearly as any could do. This arrangement was probably made, partly that the numbers might be better known, partly that all things might be done in an orderly manner, and that each might have his portion. St. Matthew's account (xiv. 21) seems to imply that the "men" were separated from the "women and children."

Ver. 41.—All the synoptists give our Lord's acts in the same words. The taking of the food into the hands would seem to have been a formal act before the "blessing," or "giving of thanks," for it. Probably our Lord used the ordinary form of benediction. This is one amongst other instances showing the fitness and propriety of "grace before meat." In considering the miraculous action which followed the benediction, our reason is baffled. It eludes our grasp. It is best simply to behold in this multiplying of the food, both the bread and the fishes, an act of Divine omnipotence; not indeed now, as at the beginning, a creation out of nothing, for here there was the nucleus of the five loaves and the two fishes, but an act of creative development of the food in its best kind; for all the works of God are perfect. He gave (*ἔδidou*) would be better rendered, *he was giving*. It was in his hands that the miracle was wrought, and the food continually multiplied.

Vers. 42, 43.—They did all eat, and were filled (*ἐχορτάσθησαν*). It might be rendered, *were fulfilled*, according to the old meaning of "fulfil." It is probable that the women and children were a considerable number;

for they would be, if possible, even more eager than the men to see the great Prophet. When all had eaten and were satisfied, they took up broken pieces, twelve baskets, and also of the fishes. St. John tells us that this was done by the express command of Christ (vi. 12); and the existence of these fragments, far more in quantity than the original supply, was a striking testimony to the reality of the miracle, and that there was enough and more than enough for all. It does not become us to pry too curiously into the method of our Lord's working; but the number of these baskets (*κοφίνους*), namely, twelve, seems to suggest that he first broke the loaves, and in breaking multiplied them, and distributed them into these baskets, one for each apostle, and that the food, as it was distributed by the disciples, was more and more multiplied, as needed, so that at length they brought back to Christ as many basketfuls of fragments as they had first received from him, and much more than the original supply. It is obvious here to remark that by this stupendous miracle our Lord showed himself to be the true Bread of life, by which the spiritual wants of all hungering souls may be supplied. "For," says St. Augustine, "he was the Word of God, and all the acts of the Word are themselves words for us. They are not as pictures, merely, to look at and admire; but as letters which we must seek to read and understand."

Ver. 45.—The other side. It would seem, as has already been stated, that there were two Bethsaiidas (or "places of fish"—fish-villages)—one to the north-east of the Sea of Galilee, not far from where the Jordan enters it, called Bethsaida Julias; and the other on the western side of the sea itself, near to Capernaum. Again and again our Lord crossed this sea to escape the crowds who followed him about, and now wished "to take him by force and make him a king." He desired for a time to be in retirement, in order that he might pray with the greater earnestness, and freedom from interruption. He also wished to make occasion for the miracle which was to follow, namely, the stilling of the tempest.

Vers. 46, 47.—St. Mark is careful, like St. Matthew, to tell us that when the even was come he was alone on the land. Both the evangelists desire to call attention to the fact that, when night came on, the disciples were alone in their boat and Jesus alone on the land. It was nightfall; and St. John informs us that "the sea was rising by reason of a great wind that blew." Then it was that the Lord left his place of prayer on the mountain, and walked upon the sea, that he might succour his disciples now distressed by the storm. It would appear that

our Lord had been obliged to use a little pressure to induce his disciples to leave him: "He constrained them (*ἀνάγκασε τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ*).

Ver. 46.—And when he had sent them away (*ἀποστέλλων*)—more literally, *had taken leave of them*, that is, the multitude—he departed into a mountain (*εἰς τὸ ὄρος*); literally, *into the mountain*; that is, the high table-land at the foot of which the multitude had been fed. Towards the north-east of the Sea of Galilee the land rises rapidly from the shore. To pray (*προσεύχασθαι*). This is a very full word, implying the outpouring of the heart to God. Our Lord did this that he might teach us in our prayers to shun the crowd, and to pray in silence and in secret, with collected mind. There is here, too, a special example for the clergy, namely, this: that when they have preached they should go apart and pray that God would make effectual that which they have delivered; that he would himself give the increase where they have planted and watered, and renew their spiritual strength, that they may return again to their labour refreshed by communion with him.

Ver. 47.—And when even was come. It was now advancing onwards into night; the wind was rising and blowing against them. Then it was that the Lord left his place of prayer on the mountain, that he might succour his disciples in their difficulties.

Vers. 48—50.—And he saw them toiling in rowing. The Greek is, according to the best readings, *καὶ ἰδὼν* (not *εἰδὼν*) *αὐτοὺς βασανιζομένους ἐν τῷ εὐαγγέλιῳ*. The word *βασανιζομένους* means more than "toiling;" it means literally, *tormented*. It is well rendered in the Revised Version by *distressed*. It was only by painful effort that they could make head against the driving storm blowing upon them from the west, that is, from the Mediterranean Sea. About the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking on the sea. The Jews formerly divided the night into three watches; but when Judæa became a Roman province they adopted the Roman division. The Romans changed the watches every three hours, lest through too long watches the guards might slumber at their posts. These periods were called "watches." If the night was short, they divided it into three watches; if long, into four. Therefore the fourth watch began at the tenth hour of the night, that is, at three o'clock in the morning, and continued to the twelfth, that is, to six o'clock. It would seem, therefore, that this storm lasted for nine hours. During that time the disciples had rowed about twenty-five or thirty furlongs, that is, about three Roman miles—eight furlongs

making a mile. The Sea of Galilee is not more than six miles broad at its widest part. They were therefore now *ἐν μέσῳ τῆς θαλάσσης* "in the midst of the sea," as St. Mark expresses it; so that, after rowing for nine hours, they had hardly crossed more than half over the sea. The Sea of Galilee is, speaking roughly, about twelve miles from north to south and six from east to west. It may be asked why our Lord suffered them to be tempest-tossed so long; and the answer is: 1. It was a trial of their faith, so as to urge them to seek more earnestly the help of God. 2. It was a lesson to accustom them to endure hardships. 3. It made the stilling of so tedious and dangerous a storm all the more grateful and welcome to them at last. The Fathers find a fine spiritual meaning in this. Jerome says, "The fourth watch is the *last*." So, too, St. Augustine, who adds that "he who has watched the ship of his Church will come at length at the fourth watch, at the end of the world, when the night of sin and evil is ended, to judge the quick and the dead." Theophylact says, "He allows his disciples to be tried by dangers, that they may be taught patience, and does not come to them till morning, that they may learn perseverance and faith." Hilary says, "The *first* watch was the age of the Law, the *second* of the prophets, the *third* of the gospel, the *fourth* of his glorious advent, when he will find her buffeted by the spirit of antichrist and by the storms of the world. And by his reception into the ship and the consequent calm is prefigured the eternal peace of the Church after his second coming" (see Wordsworth's 'New Testament.' St. Matt. xiv.). *He walked on the sea*. This he did by his Divine power, which he possessed as God, and which, when he pleased, he could assume as man. Infidelity is at fault here. Paulus, the rationalist, revived the ridiculous idea that Christ walking on the sea merely meant Christ walking on the shore, elevated above the sea; but the interpretation was rightly denounced by Lavater as "a laughable insult on logic, hermeneutics, good sense, and honesty." Was it because our Lord simply walked on the shore that the disciples "cried out and were troubled"? Was it merely for this that they were "sore amazed at themselves beyond measure and wondered"? Yet such are the shifts to which unbelief is reduced when it ventures to measure itself against the acts of Omnipotence. He would have passed by them. An expression something like that in St. Luke (xxiv. 28), "He made as though he would go further," although there the Greek in St. Luke is different (*προσποιεῖτο πορεύεσθαι*). Here it is *ἤθελε παρελθεῖν*: literally, *he wished to pass by them*;

so at least it appeared to the disciples. It has been suggested that our Lord did this that the disciples might more clearly see how the wind was stilled in his presence. They supposed that it was an apparition (*ἔδοξαν ὅτι φάντασμα εἶναι*); literally, a *phantom*. Why did they suppose this? Partly from the idea that spectres appear in the night and in the darkness to terrify men, and partly because in the darkness they could not so readily recognize that it was Jesus. Then the fact that our Lord "would have passed by them," flitting past them as though he cared nothing for them and had nothing to do with them, but was going elsewhere; this must have increased their terror. But now came the moment for him to calm their fears. Straightway he talked with them soothingly. Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. Now, Christ did this that he might teach his disciples to conquer fear and temptation, even when they are very great, and that so the deliverance and the consolation might impress them all the more powerfully and sweetly in proportion to their former terror. "It is I"—I, your Lord and Master, whom you know so well, and of whose goodness and omnipotence you have already had so much experience; I, your Master, who do not come to mock you as a phantom, but to deliver you both from fear and from storm." It will be observed that St. Mark omits all mention of Peter's act of faith "in going down from the boat, and walking upon the waters to come to Jesus," as recorded by St. Matthew (xiv. 28). Throughout this Gospel, as already noticed, St. Peter is kept in the background.

Vers. 51, 52.—The amazement of the disciples was very great. Nor was the impression confined to them alone. St. Matthew (xiv. 33) tells us that they who were in the boat came and worshipped him. They felt, at least for the moment, that they were brought into awful nearness to One whose "way is in the sea," and whose "path is in the great waters," and whose

"footsteps are not known." They needed not, however, to have been so amazed, for they had just witnessed his power in the miracle of the loaves; but they understood not (*ἐν τῷ αἵματι*) concerning the loaves, but their heart was (*σκληρομένη*) hardened; literally, *stupefied and blinded*.

Ver. 53.—They came into the land of Genesaret; literally (*ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἡλθον εἰς Γεννησαρέτ*), they came to the land unto Genesaret. This was the plain on the western side of the sea sometimes called "the Lake of Genesaret." The name Genesaret (says Cornelius à Lapide) means "a fertile garden." There was a city originally called "Chinnereth" or "Cinneroth," mentioned in Josh. xix. 25, which probably gave one of its names to this lake.

Vers. 54—56.—Straightway the people knew him. Some, no doubt, had known him before. He was now the general object of interest and attraction wherever he went. They began to carry about on their beds (*ἐπὶ τοῖς κρᾶσβάτοις*) those that were sick, where they heard he was. The original is very expressive (*ὅπου ἤκουον ὅτι ἐκεῖ ἐστὶ*), where they heard, He is there. But the best authorities omit *ἐκεῖ*. Villages, or cities, or fields (Greek, *ἀγροί*); literally, *country*, where the pursuits of agriculture would be going on. They laid the sick in the streets (Greek, *ἐν ταῖς ἀγοφαῖς*)—literally, *in the market-places*; the proper rendering—that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment. The border (*κράσπεδον*) means the "fringe" or "hem;" the garment was the outer robe worn over the tunic. And as many as touched him were made whole (*ὅσοι ἂν ἥψαντο αὐτοῦ ἐσώζοντο*); αὐτοῦ might mean either "him" or "it," that is "the border of his garment." But the difference is of little importance; for it was faith in those who touched which brought the healing virtue to the sick, whether they touched the Saviour himself or only his clothes.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Unbelief*. Our Lord may have had two reasons for leaving Capernaum and for visiting Nazareth. One, a *personal* reason—to see his mother and his sisters, who seem to have been married there. The other, a *ministerial* reason—to escape from the busy throngs who resorted to him by the lake, and to take a new centre for evangelistic labours on the part of himself and his disciples. It is singular and instructive that Nazareth should have perhaps twice furnished a striking instance of human unbelief and offence with "the Nazarene."

I. THE UNREASONABLENESS AND INEXCUSABLENESS OF UNBELIEF IN CHRIST. There were several facts, which took away all excuse from the conduct of the inhabitants of Nazareth. 1. He was well known to them. They had been acquainted with him for many years, and they had seen in him nothing but truth and integrity. His claims, therefore, should have been fairly and candidly considered. 2. He brought with him

a great and acknowledged reputation. In the most populous parts of Galilee he had fulfilled a ministry which had excited the deepest interest. His miracles were undeniable and undenied. He was the object of general attention and of widespread faith. 3. He came to Nazareth and taught publicly, thus giving his townsmen an opportunity of judging for themselves of his wisdom and moral authority. They confessed with astonishment the extraordinary character of his teaching. Yet they did not believe. And how many among us, who have even greater opportunity of forming a just judgment concerning Jesus, are found judging falsely, and consequently rejecting the Lord of life and of salvation! They judge against the evidence, and their conclusion—in no way damaging to him—is condemnation to themselves.

II. THE GROUNDS OF UNBELIEF IN CHRIST. It was unreasonable, but not inexplicable or arbitrary. 1. The Nazarenes were prejudiced against Jesus, because of *his origin and circumstances*. The son of so lowly a mother, the brother of sisters in so obscure a position, how could Jesus be regarded by his worldly townsmen with reverence? A craftsman himself, and one of an humble family, he was little likely to be received at Nazareth as he had been received elsewhere, even in the metropolis itself. 2. The other ground of prejudices was *educational deficiency* on the part of Jesus. He was the Prophet of Nazareth, and had not been trained in the rabbinical schools of learning. Whence had he his qualifications? What had been the source of his knowledge, the inspiration of his wisdom, the secret of his power? It was all a mystery to them—something at variance with their beliefs, and in contradiction to their prejudices. Very similar are the objections which men still make to Christ. Had he come a king, a conqueror, a philosopher, a scholar, then men might have honoured and welcomed him. But he came from God; and to the unspiritual there could be no more serious and fatal ground of offence than this.

III. THE REBUKE OF UNBELIEF. "A prophet is not without honour," etc. There was sadness in Christ's language and tones. Yet what a reproach was hereby conveyed to the unbelieving! They might be offended; there were those who would believe, who would evince gratitude and render honour. When we think how clearly our Lord must have foreseen the stupendous and eternal results of his ministry, we may appreciate the nobility and self-restraint of his attitude and language, and at the same time we may recognize the severity of his rebuke.

IV. THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNBELIEF. 1. The impression upon the Saviour's mind is briefly described: "He marvelled." An expression this, which gives us an insight into his humanity, and which reveals to us the depths of moral obliquity into which the cavillers had fallen. 2. The results to the people of the town were lamentable. The Prophet had come with power to bless, and prepared to heal and help. But he required the co-operation of faith; and, when this was withheld, "he could do no mighty work." A few sick folk were healed, but many forfeited a blessing within their reach. 3. Yet the rejection of Jesus by his fellow-townsmen was the occasion of benefit to others. Finding no congenial soil at Nazareth, Jesus proceeded elsewhere, to labour where labour might be more appreciated. "He went round about the villages teaching." The indifference or contempt of the unspiritual and self-sufficient may be the occasion of enlightenment and consolation to the lowly, the receptive, the needy.

APPLICATION. 1. The coming of Christ to a soul, to a community, is a moral probation, involving the most serious responsibility. 2. It is the most fatal guilt and folly, in considering the claims of Christ, to overlook the wisdom and the grace of his character and ministry, and to regard circumstances at which the superficial and the carnal may take offence.

Vers. 7—13.—*The mission of the twelve.* The twelve disciples now first became apostles. This sending forth was a prelude to their life-long mission, to be fulfilled after their Lord's ascension. They had now been long enough with the Master not only to have imbibed much of his spirit, but to have learned the nature of his ministry and to have entered into its methods. Their evangelistic journey would be disciplinary to themselves and profitable to the population of Galilee, and it would increase and extend the interest of the people in the ministry of the Lord.

I. THE PREPARATION FOR THE MISSION. Wisdom and simplicity are here alike apparent. 1. The twelve were grouped into pairs. This was for the sake of

companionship, and to secure that none should be unfriended and unsupported; as well as, in all likelihood, to bring about that one should supply the other's lack. 2. They were sent as pilgrims. Two things only they were to take with them—their sandals and their staves, which were part of their natural equipment as travellers afoot. 3. Yet they were forbidden to provide for their journey. Luxuries and superfluities they must not take with them, neither must they provide for their subsistence, but must act upon the expectation that the labourer would be deemed worthy of his hire. In all these respects the instructions given to the twelve were significant of the method in which our Lord desires his people to undertake their spiritual mission to mankind. The work is to be done in fellowship and with mutual sympathy and support; it is to be done in the spirit of those who are in the world but are not of the world, who are not entangled in its snares, and who mind heavenly things.

II. THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE MISSION. Like their Lord, the apostles were enjoined to have compassion upon the varied needs of their fellow-men, to address themselves to the supply of both spiritual and temporal wants. 1. They were to summon men to repentance, the indispensable and universal condition of pardon and life to sinful, guilty men. A change of mind and heart alone could prepare men for the blessings of the Messianic kingdom. 2. At the same time they were to confront the power of evil in its most malignant manifestations, and to cast out demons in the name of that stronger One who was binding the spiritual tyrant of mankind. 3. And they were to heal the sick, both as a symbolic act, and as a proof and exercise of true and practical benevolence. All this they did efficiently and successfully, in the authority of their Divine Lord. The nature of this commission is parallel with that given by our Saviour to his whole Church; for he has put his people in charge with the welfare of mankind, both socially and temporally, and also spiritually.

III. THE SPIRIT OF THE MISSION. The directions given by the Master as to the apostles' bearing with regard to those to whom they ministered were worthy of himself. There is a beautiful combination of meekness and dignity in these instructions, very like the Lord who gave them. Wherever received with cordiality, the apostles were directed to abide with their hosts, grateful for kindness and content with their entertainment. Wherever their message was rejected and they were disregarded, the twelve were commanded to "shake off the dust under their feet" for a testimony against the unbelieving and impenitent. The servants of the Lord Jesus cannot too carefully study these counsels, in considering in what spirit they shall fulfil the commission entrusted to them in human society. On the one hand, all selfish desires, all pride and restlessness, must be repressed; on the other hand, the high vocation must be esteemed, the office must be magnified, the authority of the Redeemer must be upheld, and the responsibility of rejecting the gospel must solemnly, and with appropriate dignity, be cast upon the unbelieving and unspiritual.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. All Christians may be reminded of their position in this world as the representatives and ministers of Christ. 2. All hearers of the gospel may be admonished as to the serious responsibility they incur when a message from heaven is brought before their minds.

Vers. 14—29.—*Sin-hating righteousness.* The growing fame of Jesus reached all parts of the land and all classes of society. Not only the poor and diseased, the neglected and the despised, heard of the compassionate heart and the mighty deeds of the Son of man; the learned were jealous of his influence with the people, and powerful rulers wondered what was the secret of his power. Many were the explanations given of the new Teacher's authority. Whilst some traced a resemblance between him and the olden Hebrew prophets, others even deemed him the greatest of the order—Elijah himself, returning to the land of his ministry, in accordance with what was deemed the inspired prediction. But the most singular of all conjectures was that of Herod—that John the Baptist, whom he had beheaded in circumstances of atrocious dishonour to himself, had arisen from the dead. Mentioning this conjecture, the evangelist is naturally led to relate the incident of the forerunner's violent death—one of the most awful, tragic incidents in all history. Simply tracing the narrative, we meet with successive embodiments of moral fact and law.

I. THE APPREHENSIONS OF A GUILTY CONSCIENCE. There seems to have been but little

in the ministry of Jesus to recall that of John. John did no miracle; the fame of Jesus was largely owing to the miracles by which his ministry was continuously signalized. The power to attract multitudes was the one point obviously in common. But any association was sufficient to revive within Herod's breast the memory of his weakness and his crime, and to reproach him with the destruction of a blameless and heroic, prophetic man. "Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all!"

II. THE RESENTMENT OF THE VIOIOUS UNDER REBUKE. Antipas was guilty of a double incest and a double adultery; he married his niece, who was also his brother's wife, that brother being still alive; and drove his own spouse from him by contracting this sinful union. Herodias was probably influenced by ambition in accepting a position so disgraceful. Amidst the silence or the applause of the courtiers, one voice arose to condemn this shameless conduct. It was the voice of the upright and dauntless John, whose rebuke was, "It is not lawful!" No wonder that the wretched woman set herself against the stern prophet; his presence, his life, must have been to her an incessant reproach. Fain would she have killed him, fearing this influence with the king, and trembling for her own precarious position. There is no hatred so virulent and awful as the hatred of sinners against faithful and righteous rebuke.

III. THE CONFLICT BETWEEN CONSCIENCE AND PASSION. The unhappy Herod was torn by two conflicting forces. On the one hand, the malice of Herodias urged him to put the fearless John to death, and thus to silence his rebukes; on the other hand, he respected and feared the holy and dauntless prophet, and he was impelled to listen to his words, hearing him eagerly, yet with unsolved perplexity of mind. He kept his prisoner safely, even from the malice of his paramour, whom he would gladly have gratified had not his conscience barred the way.

IV. YOUTH AND BEAUTY THE INSTRUMENT OF VINDICTIVENESS. There is a strange contrast between the frivolous and fascinating performances of youth and loveliness, and the dark designs in the background. Herodias watched and delighted to see the passions of her sensual husband moved at sight of her daughter's charms, to hear the rash promise from those unrighteous lips. Base were the means, and baser still the end. When woman's charms are used not only to provoke lust, but to induce to cruelty, can there be a more awful instance of the misuse of the fair gifts of the Creator? Yet history tells of many a tale like this, though perhaps of none so utterly and so irredeemably mournful.

V. FALSE HONOUR AND WICKED PRIDE PREFERRED TO JUSTICE. Vengeance and malice in Herodias are fitly matched with weakness and unrighteousness in her paramour. There can be no question that it is right to break a promise when the promise involves in its fulfilment the commission of a crime. Such a promise it is wrong to make, but to fulfil it makes one wrong two. The motives of Antipas were vile and mean; he wished to gratify the malice of a woman, and to vindicate his arbitrary authority in the presence of his guests. And for such motives he was ready to sacrifice a good man's life.

VI. MALICE TRIUMPHANT. The foolish word was kept; the wicked woman was gratified; the infamous deed was done. As the Lord expressed it, "Elijah came, and they did unto him whatsoever they listed." Although the world is ruled by a just Providence, righteousness does not always prosper; vice and crime are not always restrained, or even immediately and manifestly punished. The voice of just rebuke is often silenced; the head of innocence is often laid in the dust; "the godly man faileth;" the vilest men are exalted. All this is permitted that there may be scope for the exercise of faith; that virtue may be tried as in the furnace; that men may learn to look forward to a future state, in which grievances shall be redressed, and retribution shall be made, and the righteousness of the Divine Judge shall be fully vindicated.

VII. THE GOOD MOURN WHOM THE BAD DESTROY. During his brief ministry John had made many disciples, had attached to him many friends. During his captivity, his admirers had been severed from him. Now came the last opportunity for manifesting their reverential affection. When the company of the Baptist's disciples, hearing of their master's violent death, gathered themselves together, and carried the mutilated body to the tomb, what a contrast they afforded to the company of carousers, in whose presence Herod's foolish oath had doomed a brave, pure man to death! It is well, even if "evil entreated" by the frivolous, sensual, and malicious, to have a place in good men's hearts, and after death to live in the remembrance of the righteous.

Vers. 30—44.—*No rest for Jesus.* The twelve have fulfilled their brief mission of evangelization, have returned to their Master, and tell him of the incidents and results of their mission. Jesus takes occasion to rest, and to give them rest, and with this intent withdraws to a desert place. This passage shows us with what result.

I. THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH THE LORD SEEKS RETIREMENT. 1. Perhaps to escape from the notice of Herod, who, having heard of his fame, may seek to get him within his power, even as before he had imprisoned John. 2. To secure a brief period of bodily repose for himself and for the twelve. Their time and attention have been so occupied, that they have had no leisure even for their meals. It is had economy in Christian workers to neglect the claims of the body, which needs to be kept, by food, exercise, and repose, in a sound and healthy state, that work for Christ may be done vigorously and cheerfully. 3. To enjoy leisure for spiritual intercourse. The twelve need to be taught that they may teach others; and this is a kind of work which needs leisure and quiet, and uninterrupted hours. The wise and experienced may spend their time to advantage in equipping the young and active among Christ's disciples for spiritual campaigns.

II. THE MULTITUDE INVADE THE LORD'S RETIREMENT. 1. It is a sign of their eager interest to see and hear the great Teacher and Physician. The tidings spread; the people anticipate their Benefactor; they outrun him, and are ready to meet him when he disembarks. 2. They find him willing to sacrifice his ease for the sake of his ministry. Having perhaps taken a few hours' repose and slumber as the boat has rocked at anchor near the shore, Jesus lands, only to find the people awaiting him upon the beach. Instead of pushing off again and seeking a remoter seclusion, Jesus readily addresses himself to his work. A lesson this in diligence and zeal! 3. The sad condition of the people awakens Christ's commiseration. Others might have said, "The people are comfortable and cared for." But Jesus sees that spiritually they are as sheep without a shepherd, and his heart is touched at the spectacle. It needs the Spirit of Jesus to look thus upon the spiritually destitute and famishing, to penetrate through their outward guise to their souls' needs.

III. JESUS PROVIDES FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL WANTS. 1. He teaches them; he, the Source of wisdom, imparts from his abundance to their necessities. 2. He teaches them at length and with variety. What the "many things" were in which he instructed them we know not, but may judge from the record of his discourses. So the swift hours pass on. He speaks as never man spake, and the people hear him gladly.

IV. JESUS SUPPLIES THEIR TEMPORAL NEEDS. 1. In this his action is in contrast with the spirit of his disciples, who would first have him dismiss the multitude, and who then put obstacles in the way of supplying their wants. We have no reason to blame the disciples, but we have reason to admire the Master. 2. Jesus uses the provision which is at hand. The bread is obviously and utterly insufficient, yet the Lord makes use of it, and chooses rather to multiply than to create. Our Divine Master here gives us a needed lesson—to turn all things to good account—to employ the circumstances, the opportunities, the gifts Providence appoints for us, rather than to grieve that we have not other means of usefulness. 3. He acts in an orderly method. His directions as to the seemly and convenient arrangement of the multitude are in consonance with Divine wisdom, and are an example and admonition for us. God is not the author of confusion in any Churches; confusion is the devil's work. "Order is Heaven's first law." 4. Jesus sets an example of gratitude. "Looking up to heaven, he blessed." A rebuke to such as take their daily food without giving of thanks; an admonition to remember whence the most common and customary of our mercies come. 5. He makes use of his disciples. Observe the honour which the Divine Lord puts upon human agency and instrumentality. The disciples could not provide; that was no reason why they should not distribute. The feeblest can offer to his hungering neighbours, the bread of life eternal. 6. He satisfies the need of all. It is a vast crowd; yet not one is left unfed. There is in Christ "enough for all, enough for each, enough for evermore." It is a symbol of the sufficiency of the Divine provision for all the spiritual necessities of mankind. The bread of heaven came down, and "giveth life unto the world." 7. The provision is even superabundant; it is more than enough. How royally and munificently the Lord of all provides for his dependent

creatures! There is yet room at his table, and bread in his store, bounty in his heart, and blessing in his hands. "Come, for all things are ready!"

Vers. 45—52.—"It is I." How picturesque and impressive is the scene! Jesus has dismissed the multitude, and has sent his disciples away in the boat to the western shore. He himself has retired to a mountain, by prayer to calm his spirit and to strengthen himself for his ministry. Night comes on; the wind rises from the west, and the waters of the lake are lashed into a storm. By the fitful light of the moon, breaking now and again through the drifting clouds, Jesus, as he stands upon the hill-top, observes the boat tossed upon the waves. Her sails are down, and the disciples are rowing, toiling, but are making no way against the gale. Jesus descends the hill, and, in the exercise of his supernatural power, walks upon the water. The superstitious fishermen, naturally enough, take the figure approaching them for a spectre—some foreboding spirit of the deep—and they cry aloud in terror. Then come the words, so authoritative and so gentle, "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid!" The hearts of the disciples and the waves of the lake alike are calmed. Amazement fills every breast, and as they approach the land, the rescued mariners adore with fresh admiration their Deliverer and Lord.

I. CHRIST'S PEOPLE HAVE SOMETIMES TO PASS THROUGH A SEA OF TROUBLE. 1. Circumstances without may conspire with fears within. Christians are in trouble as other men, and they sometimes dread lest they should be overwhelmed. 2. Christians may encounter trouble in the very act of obeying Christ. Just as the twelve met the storm in fulfilling their Lord's directions to return to Gennesaret, so we may meet with trials and dangers in the path of obedience. If so, let us not count it strange.

II. CHRIST OBSERVES AND SYMPATHIZES WITH HIS PEOPLE IN THEIR TROUBLE. They may be unconscious and forgetful of this. Little did the twelve, as they toiled in rowing, imagine that the eye of their Master was upon them; but it was. From the hill-top he witnessed their struggles; he, the Lord of the waves, suffered their violence; he, his disciples' Friend, allowed them to come into extremity, and did not prevent their fears. So he may, for good reasons, allow his people to experience distress. Yet he is not unmindful and not unmoved. He thinks of them, watches over them, sympathizes with them. He may seem absent, but he is not.

III. CHRIST'S PRESENCE AND VOICE BRING COMFORT AND PEACE TO THE HEARTS OF THE TROUBLED. Faith discerns that presence, though unseen; that voice, though unheard. "It is I!"—I, who love you; I, who died for you; I, who provide for your wants, and watch over your souls; I, who sent you on life's voyage; it is I, who am with you always, who now come to seek and save you! When Jesus says, "Be of good cheer; be not afraid!" his are no empty words; they are words fitted to banish fear, to instil confidence, to inspire courage, to awaken hope.

IV. CHRIST'S POWER AND GRACE BRING DELIVERANCE TO HIS TROUBLED ONES. We are indebted to him for more than sympathy. His tender kindness, his strong promises, his unflinching faithfulness, all issue in practical aid, in gracious interposition. He is the Lord of all hearts, and can assuage the tempests of the soul. He controls all circumstances, and compels all to co-operate for his people's good. "He maketh the storm a calm;" "So he bringeth them to the desired haven." Who, upon the troubled sea of time, would be without a Comforter so gracious, a Helper so mighty?

V. CHRIST'S INTERPOSITIONS AWAKEN THE AMAZEMENT, REVERENCE, AND GRATITUDE OF HIS PEOPLE. Like the twelve, we have often too much reason, when we experience the compassionate interference of our Lord upon our behalf, to blame ourselves because our hardness of heart has made Divine deliverance seem strange to us. This is just what we ought to have looked for, to have expected with assurance. Oh for grace, that when the voice from heaven addresses us, "It is I," we may respond, "It is Thou, indeed, O Lord, whom we honour, upon whom we call, in whom we trust! It is thou, whose presence is ever dear, whose voice is ever welcome, whose heart is never cold, and whose help is never far!"

APPLICATION. 1. An encouragement to obedience. 2. A rebuke to fear. 3. An assurance of Divine sympathy and aid. 4. A call to grateful adoration.

Vers. 53—56.—The popularity of the Divine Physician. At this time the tide of

Christ's popularity was at the flood. In a few verses, the evangelist strikingly depicts the general excitement which the presence of the Prophet of Nazareth awakened amidst the thronging and busy population.

I. THE PRESENCE OF THE DIVINE PHYSICIAN AMONG THE PEOPLE. Jesus sometimes retired to desert solitudes; but, for the most part, he chose to live among the people, and to be accessible to all classes and to all characters. This might well be his motive for spending so much of his life in the thickly peopled district on the western shores of the Lake of Gennesaret. As the Son of man, Jesus mingled freely with the race he came to save and bless.

II. THE SPREAD AMONG THE PEOPLE OF THE GOOD TIDINGS. If Jesus was willing to live and work amongst the inhabitants of this district, they, for their part, were eager to embrace every opportunity of intercourse with him. Not that they were generally influenced by high motives that they resorted to him as to a spiritual teacher. It is evident that the interest felt in Jesus was very largely owing to his power and willingness to heal the sick and suffering. But, from whatever motive, it is of the highest importance that the children of men should be led to interest themselves in Christ. The tidings that Jesus is the Saviour of the world deserve to be published far and wide, as the best news for all mankind.

III. THE AGENCY EMPLOYED TO BRING THE NEEDY INTO THE PRESENCE OF THE SAVIOUR. As we read the vigorous language of the evangelist, we seem to see the eager, kind-hearted people, the peasantry and the fishermen, hurrying throughout the district, seeking out all the diseased and infirm, carrying them on their couches to the places where Jesus is expected, and laying them in the open spaces, that they may be brought under the notice of the mighty and benevolent physician.

IV. THE CONTACT OF THE PATIENTS WITH THE PHYSICIAN. The healing looked for was effected, not by means and instruments, but by the great Healer himself. Accordingly, what the sufferers desired was, to lay hold upon Jesus, or even upon the hem or fringe of his garment. An indication this of the method of the sinner's salvation. To come to Christ, and spiritually to lay hold upon him,—such is the condition of securing all the blessings which Jesus brings to man.

V. THE EXPERIENCE OF HEALING. It mattered not how many came, by whom they were brought, in what place they encountered Jesus, from what disease they suffered; "as many as touched him were made whole." There is no limitation to the healing power or to the healing grace of Immanuel. He is "mighty to save;" he saves "to the uttermost;" and his salvation is perfect and eternal.

APPLICATION. 1. This narrative reminds the sinner where to look for deliverance—to Christ, and Christ alone. 2. This narrative sets before us the office of the Church; it is to bring sinful souls to the one Divine, almighty Saviour.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Jesus visiting his own country.* By going thither—

I. HE GRATIFIED A HUMAN YEARNING. In a previous chapter he is reported to have asked, "Who is my mother and my brethren?" He now shows that those broad human relations he had claimed did not imply the neglect of nearer ones, or indifference to them. He sought to benefit his own people in the highest way, even whilst he would not suffer the narrow claims of his home to interfere with the wider claims of his kingdom. Have we so interpreted home relations, patriotism, local attachment, social ties?

II. HE ILLUSTRATED AFRESH AN OLD AND FAMILIAR EXPERIENCE. 1. *He was one of many, yet by himself even in this.* 2. *One of the greatest of griefs to a pious spirit, to be hindered from doing good and conferring benefit.* 3. *A greater humiliation than his human birth, because a moral one consciously experienced.*

III. HE EXHIBITED DIVINE MERCY. 1. *Past offences were forgiven.* 2. *Although conscious of restriction because of their unbelief and indifference, he still persisted in his works of mercy.*—M.

Vers. 2, 6.—*The twofold wonder awakened by the gospel.* 1. **IN MEN.** 1. *Because of contrast between the apparent origin and the Divine pretensions of Christ.* 2. *Because of*

the seeming disproportion between the results actually produced and the instruments. A curious phase this of human incredulity, as if the works did not speak for themselves! Failing the discovery of an evidently great cause, the results themselves are not credited with being what they seem to be. This is characteristic of human nature in all ages.

II. IN CHRIST. The unbelief itself, of which the human astonishment at his words and works was but the sign, was a still greater marvel to our Saviour. The believing, ingenuous soul cannot understand unbelief. And truly there is something unnatural and not to be looked for in the incredulity exhibited by men towards truth and goodness, and the proffered mercy of God.—M.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Detracting from the Divine greatness of Christ.* **I. HOW THIS IS DONE.** 1. *By attributing to secondary causes Divine effects.* 2. *Absence of faith and spiritual sympathy.* 3. *By being offended at the mystery of his humiliation, either in himself or his followers.*

II. WHAT IT PRODUCES. 1. *Unsatisfied indecision.* Perpetual questioning. 2. *Hardening of heart.* 3. *The doubter's own loss.* Not only the works of mercy he might have wrought, but the Merciful One himself, are thus forfeited.—M.

Ver. 6.—*Christ ministering to the villages.* **I. REJECTED IN ONE DIRECTION, THE SAVIOUR BEGINS AFRESH ELSEWHERE.** 1. *Indomitable zeal, and inextinguishable love for souls.* 2. *Divine wisdom.* The sinning city or individual not altogether abandoned even when left alone. When the Redeemer cannot work within a heart, he will work about it. Where faith is not at once forthcoming, evidence is accumulated, and the unbelieving are approached from new directions and points of vantage. Every sinner is besieged by Christ. The country sends up fresh elements to the growing population of the cities; how important that it should send godliness and righteousness with these!

II. IT IS THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY TO CARE FOR THOSE WHO ARE AT A DISADVANTAGE. 1. *They were out of the way and apt to be overlooked.* 2. *They were unfavourably situated for the rapid spread of new ideas.* 3. *They were for the most part humble.* "To the poor the gospel is preached" was one of the characteristics of Christianity, of which John was to be informed; and it might have been added, "by Christ himself." The moral influence of this example. How ought all ministers of the gospel and Christian labourers to eschew self and the love of fame! The grandest work of the ministry may be performed in the humblest sphere. Men are to be evangelized for their own sakes.—M.

Vers. 7—13.—*The mission of the twelve.* Already the Master had called them more than once. He had "many things to say" unto them, and was ever drawing them into closer sympathy with himself, and a higher sense of individual responsibility. St. Mark is not so full as St. Matthew, but from what he does tell us we are able to understand the nature of the work and its reason. The disciples are now to become apostles.

I. CHRIST PREPARES AND AUTHORIZES HIS OWN MINISTERS. There was need for this. Many whom he had cured were proclaiming him, not only without permission, but against his express command; and the devils were continually confessing him. This was inconvenient on account of danger to his person, because of the fact that he had been charged with being in collusion with Beelzebub, and the misrepresentation that took place as to the nature and aims of his kingdom. Christ first says, "Come, follow me," ere he says, "Go." He "began to send them forth by two and two," i.e. tentatively, as they were ready, and as his purpose demanded. "Great is the authority of conferring authority" (Bengel). 1. *The representatives of the Christian ministry were qualified for their task by the personal instruction of the Master, and communion with him in suffering.* 2. *Those most highly qualified to proclaim the gospel waited until he authorized them.* 3. *Their appointment had relation to their personal fitness and the exigencies of Christ's work.* All the disciples do not seem ever to have been away from Christ at one time.

II. WHEN CHRIST HAS PREPARED HIS DISCIPLES HE HAS WORK FOR THEM TO DO. 1. *Their office was not to be a sinecure.* The state of society, its rampant evils, its transitional character, and the attitude of expectancy exhibited by many, were so many reasons for their being sent forth. 2. *There is never a time when earnest Christian effort is not*

needed. 3. *The adaptation of men is to be considered in determining the ministry they have to perform.*

III. THE APOSTLESHIP INVOLVED TESTIMONY, MORAL APPEAL, AND SUPERNATURAL POWER. (Vers. 7, 11—13.) The particular duties of the Christian ministry are determined by the demands of the age, etc., in which it is carried on, but in essence they are always the same.

IV. IT INVOLVED A DIVINE COMMUNION AND A HUMAN FELLOWSHIP. 1. *He sent them forth, but his spiritual presence went with them.* It was only of what he had given that they could communicate to others, and as he accompanied their efforts with his power. 2. *He sent them "by two and two."* For mutual comfort, help, and co-operation. The deficiencies of one would be made up in the gifts of the other.

V. THE EQUIPMENT FOR IT WAS SPIRITUAL, NOT MATERIAL; DIVINE, NOT HUMAN. What they were to take with them is suggested only by the directions as to what they were not to take. It was in their message and its spiritual accompaniment their influence was to consist. The Master who sent them would provide for them. Christianity, which subsidizes all honourable means and influences, is independent of all. "Silver and gold have I none, but what I have give I thee" (Acts iii. 6).—M.

Vers. 14—16.—*Accounting for Christ.* Interesting as a photograph of contemporary opinion. Abrupt, picturesque, graphic. "He said" ("they said," in some ancient authorities, as in Luke) is to be understood impersonally or of Herod. If the latter, the very repetition of Herod's statement, in ver. 16 (which in both Authorized and New Versions is worded similarly to the order and style of ver. 14, but which ought to have its inverted, twisted character represented in the English, viz. "whom I beheaded—John: he is risen"), gives us fresh insight into the workings of Herod's mind.

I. THERE IS EVER A VARIETY OF OPINION IN THE WORLD ABOUT CHRIST. Whenever he is heard of human thought is exercised about him. The element of the extraordinary is always recognized as attaching to his personality and action. "However great be that variety, yet often the truth lies outside of it" (Bengel).

II. CHRIST HAS TO BE ACCOUNTED FOR. Very little was as yet known about him in Galilee, yet the question as to who he was at once arose. The reason of this is that the character of Christ is a challenge to the spiritual nature of man. 1. *It appeals to the spiritual hopes of men.* Even with the most debased and degraded, it is from the unseen that help and salvation are looked for. The common Jewish notion, that Elijah should come again, and the more general one, that the prophets were not dead, but reappeared at different times to repeat their messages, were but phases of the inextinguishable hope that characterizes the popular mind in all ages. They both start into life again at the appearance of Christ. He cannot be thought of by them but religiously or spiritually, the religious nature of his work is so pronounced. "The thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed." 2. *Conscience is addressed.* It is the king who fancies he detects the ghostly association. The guilty past started up in all its horror. John's faithful teachings and lofty example could not be forgotten. Was it the long-slumbering national conscience of the Jews that identified Christ with the prophets, whom their fathers had killed? It is the guilty conscience that fears him; the believer hails him with rapture and delight. So the Son of man judges the secrets of men all through time, and at the judgment day.

III. ANY BUT THE HIGHEST ESTIMATE OF CHRIST WILL PROVE UNSATISFACTORY. Popular opinion was at variance within itself; it falls below the true dignity of Christ. 1. *There was, of course, an element of truth in their guesses.* All true spiritual workers are represented by Christ, and their work is identified in greater or less degree with his. The kingdom of God is one in all its manifestations through all time. The higher personality and office of Christ is inclusive of all lesser ones. He was a Prophet, and more. 2. *It was an inversion of the true order of reference which they perpetrated.* Those prophets were but dependents of Christ, owing all their power and illumination to his indwelling Spirit. 3. *Their error was due to moral causes.* Had their fathers received the prophet's message instead of killing him, the generation of Christ's day might better have understood his gospel. The law of heredity and traditional mental attitude had much to do with their blunders, but most of all their own rejection of John, or supine allowance of his death. It seemed as if the spiritual conscience

ness of the Jews was condemned to stationariness at the very point of Divine revelation where John had failed to reform them. And so all men's lack of faith and their unworthy conceptions of Christ have a moral root also. It is only as Christ himself, by his Spirit and teaching, enables us that we can truly say, "Our Lord, and our God."—M.

Vers. 17—29.—*A soul's tragedy.* I. FALSE STEPS. (Ver. 17.) 1. *Unlawful relations.* 2. *Resisting the messenger of God.*

II. CONFLICTING INFLUENCES. (Vers. 19, 20.) The fearless court-preacher and the woman he denounced. The messenger of Truth and the associate in pleasure and vice. Representative of the way in which evil and good incarnate themselves, and work upon the heart of every man. The temptation to which Herod was subject was great; but he was not left without moral witness and aid.

III. SATAN'S INSTRUMENT AND OPPORTUNITY. (Vers. 21—25.) 1. *The instrument is in a sense self-prepared*, coming as it does out of the very heart of moral complication and love of unhallowed pleasure. 2. *Yet is it also chosen and armed by the evil one.* 3. *It is an instrument calculated to work insidiously, unsuspectedly, and yet surely and irrevocably.* Who would imagine that a damsel would wield such tremendous destinies? The weakness of every man is thoroughly understood by the enemy of souls, and unscrupulously appealed to. The works of Satan are rather hidden than manifest. 4. *The attack is made when the moral sense is drowned in sensual pleasure and excitement.* Company, wine, the fascination of the dance, and the flattering of pride by the presence of the Galilean nobles. What importunity cannot secure, a skilful manoeuvre may attain by surprise. The end is gained, provisionally, in the royal offer to the maid; a concealed, implicit pledge of what is not at the moment realized. Indefinite promises like this are full of danger; they cover so many unthought-of possibilities, and carry with them the illegitimate show of obligation even with respect to things not contemplated when the promise is given. The moral sense which is insensible to real duties avenges its perversion by manufacturing fictitious obligations, and attributing chief importance to them. "Honour" is the counterfeit of morality in many minds. A promise made as Herod made his is foolish and wrong, yet it cannot bind its maker to the performance of a further wrong. If men were only as attentive to their vows to God as to their vain and boastful promises and challenges to one another, they need fear no consequences. We bind ourselves with our own ropes. It was a *birthday* on which Herod committed spiritual suicide. Many a parallel to this may be found in the lives of men.

IV. THE CATASTROPHE. The career of sin has been likened to playing the devil with his own loaded dice. The thoughtless word of Herod committed him according to his perverted sense of honour, and the sequel was already predetermined and inevitable. 1. In sanctioning John's death, Herod *violated the deepest instincts of his nature, and rejected the voice of God.* 2. *Crowned a life of sin by a heinous and irrevocable crime.* 3. (Humanly speaking) *Destroyed his own hopes of salvation.* His history henceforth is one of steady degeneration and ever darker crime. In many lives there are determining circumstances like this of Herod; they put mountains and abysses between the sinner and the God he has dishonoured. "John the Baptist is risen from the dead;" "Whom I beheaded—John: he is risen," are discoveries which lighten not one whit the burden of his guilt, and bring no hope to his despair. They are the walls of a remorse from which has departed the grace and power of repentance. Yet is Christ greater than John, and able to save from even greater crimes than the murder of John, if he be but recognized and believed.—M.

Vers. 30, 31.—*Telling Jesus.* (Cf. Matt. xiv. 12, 13.) Christ the central Figure all through the evangelic narrative. His personal importance is never obscured. It is from him apostles go forth; it is to him they return. Kings note his presence and works, and the people crowd to his ministry.

I. WHAT THE APOSTLES TOLD JESUS. "All things whatsoever they had done, and whatsoever they had taught." 1. *They narrated their experience.* Most of them had to speak of their work and its results. It had exceeded their most sanguine expectations. The people had received them everywhere with joy, and they had nothing but

success to relate. A few, however (Matt. xiv. 12), had a tale of personal sorrow to pour into his ears. They had been disciples of John the Baptist, whom Herod had just beheaded. Their hopes had been dashed to the ground, and they scarcely knew what else to do than "tell him." More disquieting still was their story, for they informed him that the tetrarch was anxious to see him, as he fancied he was John, whom he had beheaded, risen from the dead. So varied is the history of the Christian life! 2. *It was but imperfectly understood by themselves.* What they had done (*i.e.* miracles and exorcisms) was in their estimation most important, and is naturally enough mentioned first by the evangelist. By-and-by they were to learn that it was only for the sake of the teaching accompanying them that the "signs" were of any value. And so it was with the sorrow and fear of the disciples of John; they knew not their real consequence. Both were probably exaggerated. Still they did not feel they had to wait until everything was clearly and fully understood. All alike are drawn towards him. We, too, spontaneously pour forth our sorrow and joy, our fear and our confidence, into his ear, sure of sympathy and help.

II. WHY DID THEY TELL JESUS? 1. *A sense of responsibility.* It was he who commissioned them at the first, and they felt bound to carry back their report. He was the subject of their preaching, and of chief importance. And it was only as his power was imparted and continued to them that they were able to proceed. 2. *A feeling of interest.* The very enthusiasm and excitement brought them back to Jesus—the pleasure of telling him all the wonders and successes of their mission. Points, too, that specially struck their attention were referred to him for explanation. 3. *A yearning for sympathy.* They felt that he would most heartily respond to their mood, whether of elation or despondency. No one ever came with a genuine human feeling to Christ, and received a rebuff.

III. HOW DID HE RECEIVE THEM? He had evidently listened to their whole story. Now they met with: 1. *Kindly appreciation.* 2. *Gracious provision for their needs.* 3. *Precautions for their mutual safety.*—M.

Ver. 31.—*Christ's offer of rest.* I. THE PECULIAR GIFT OF JESUS TO HIS SERVANTS. "Into a desert place;" only Christ to speak with them, to comfort and to advise.

II. A MANIFOLD PROVISION FOR HIS SERVANTS' NEEDS. Calm after excitement; repose after labour; meditation upon Divine marvels and experiences. Security from threatening dangers.

III. A PREPARATION FOR FUTURE SERVICE. "Rest a while."—M.

Ver. 31.—*The Christian worker's rest.* I. IN A WORLD WHERE THERE IS NO TRUE REST.

II. PROCEEDING FROM THE LORD. 1. *Divinely commanded.* 2. *Divinely prepared.* 3. *Divinely shared.*

III. TO FIT FOR FURTHER SERVICE.—M.

Ver. 31.—*"Coming and going."* I. A PICTURE OF THE WORLD'S LIFE.

II. INDICATIVE OF THE WORLD'S SPIRITUAL STATE.

III. AN OCCASION OF DIFFICULTY TO THE CHURCH.—M.

Vers. 32—34.—*Christ's sympathy for men.* I. HOW IT WAS CALLED FORTH. 1. *The physical exhaustion and hunger of the people.* 2. *Their restlessness.* 3. *Their inarticulate longing for some higher truth and life.*

II. THE CHARACTER IT ASSUMED. Shepherdly anxiety and care. 1. *An intense compassion and solicitude.* 2. *A deep religious sense of the Divine ideal from which they had departed.* The spirit, the very words of prophecy, occur to him in the connection (Numb. xxvii. 17; Zech. x. 2). 3. *A practical undertaking of their care.*

III. HOW IT EXPRESSED ITSELF. He taught them many things. By word and act he strove to lift their hearts to God, and to suggest the ineffable mysteries of his kingdom. The miracle that followed.—M.

Ver. 34.—*The shepherdly emotion of Christ.* I. NATURALLY ELICITED.

II. A DIVINE INTERPRETATION OF HUMAN DISTRESS.

III. A FULFILMENT OF THE WORLD'S HOPE.

IV. AN UNCONSCIOUS PROOF OF HIS BEING THE SAVIOUR OF MANKIND.—M.

Vers. 35—44.—Feeding the five thousand: a miracle. One of the most signally demonstrative and masterly of Christ's miracles, whether we consider the circumstances in which it was wrought, the details of its carrying out, or the dimensions and absoluteness of the result. How carefully the evidence was accumulated by Christ of the truly miraculous nature of this work! It was a grand display of—

I. WISDOM. 1. *A practical (and symbolical) discipline of the Church in its great function towards the world.* 2. *A demonstration to the world of the principles and order of the kingdom of God.*

II. POWER. 1. *Creative.* 2. *Multiplying human resources.*

III. MERCY. Wisdom and power co-operative towards the accomplishing of the highest blessing. Mercy the chief work of God as of man. 1. *Bodily*, in the relief of the hunger, consideration for the weariness of the multitude. 2. *Spiritual*, in giving spiritual bread, in teaching dependence upon God, and in enjoining economy of Divine gifts.—M.

Vers. 35—44.—Feeding the five thousand: a parable. It is no less remarkable in this aspect; perhaps it was its suggestion of spiritual things which was its chief aim. It sets forth the physical and spiritual dependence of men upon God, and the Divine Father's willingness and power to provide for his children; or, the sufficiency of the kingdom of God for the sustenance of its subjects. The nature and principles of Divine mercy to mankind are also suggested.

I. THE POVERTY OF THE CHURCH. Both discovered and concealed; discovered to itself, concealed from the world. How delicate the consideration and tact of Christ! 1. *In position.* In the desert. For its needs no dependence upon the world is suffered, whose gold and silver and bread are "not convenient." 2. *In material supplies.* Only five loaves and two fishes, and these, as it were, adventitious. 3. *In spiritual resource.* (1) *In evangelical sentiment.* How callous the suggestion—"Send them away"! There is no sense of responsibility for the well-being of the multitude, physically or spiritually. The question as to the "two hundred pennyworth of bread" is full of selfish dismay; the sacrifice is contemplated as not only great, but not to be entertained. "Give ye them to eat" conveys rebuke as well as command. (2) *In administrative expedients.* They had everything to learn. No spiritual imagination is forthcoming to conceive of Divine aid in a grave exigency of the kingdom of God, to plan for the supply of those who have been led, by eagerness for the bread of life, to imperil their command of material necessities. Had the true feeling been there, the ideas and inspirations required to give effect to it would not have been wanting. Has the Church of to-day yet risen to its high vocation? Our missionary enterprise and inward institutional development have not been proportionate to our light and privilege. Surely the day is at hand when all these half-hearted and disappointing efforts shall be left behind and forgotten in more vigorous, comprehensive, and statesmanlike undertakings.

II. THE RICHES OF CHRIST. 1. *A satisfying, saving fulness, administered through the appointed means of grace already existent in his Church.* The material resources of his people can never be of primary consequence; for: 2. *Means rightly used in his name will be indefinitely multiplied to satisfy all the demands made upon it.* One man, with the Spirit of the Lord in him, will be more powerful than Synods and Churches without it. And the means used thus must ever appear disproportionately insignificant as compared with the result. "What is little become an abundance through the blessing of God" (Godwin).

III. CONDITIONS OF DIVINE COMMUNICATION TO MEN. There was an antecedent ground for Christ's consideration, viz. that the people had exposed themselves to inconvenience and danger through desire for his doctrine; corresponding to the principle, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." "He provideth the lower good for those who were seeking the higher" (Godwin). But the immediately declared conditions were: 1. *Obedience.* The disciples were to do as he bade them, and so through them, in turn, the crowd.

The resources at hand—loaves and fishes—were to be sought for, calculated, and brought forth. The people are bidden to place themselves in a position most fittingly and impressively to receive the benefit to be conferred. 2. *Order*. There is something very impressive in the symmetrical arrangement, “by hundreds and by fifties.” It was manifestly a measure of the highest importance from the point of view of “supply.” “Order is Heaven’s first law.” In the kingdom of God all things must “be done decently and in order.” A settled government, properly appointed officers, and, in general, method, system. So in the economy there must be no waste. The saving from one season is to be the supply of another. 3. *Divinely commissioned service*. Some have supposed that the multiplication of the bread was effected in the hands of Christ; some, in the hands of the disciples; some, in the hands of the multitude; others, in all three stages of its administration. Yet are the apostles—the called and commissioned servants of Christ—the true “stewards of the mysteries.” The qualification, however, is not mechanical, but spiritual. It is the Spirit of Christ in them that fits them for their task, and ensures their efficiency. 4. *Prayer*. The meal is a communion with God. His blessing must be asked. It is sacramental. Only as God blesses the provision can it be sufficient. It is obvious that the grand condition of all these requirements is *faith*. It is the calling forth and exercising of this which crowns the miracle as a consummate grace.—M.

Ver. 43.—*Spiritual economy*. From other accounts we learn that this measure was ordered by Christ. The power and the restraint of Christ are about equally demonstrative of his divinity. A strict and immediate economy is demanded in his kingdom. We are to appreciate the grace received; its very fragments are to be precious. The life and work of the Christian have to exhibit a wise and careful stewardship. This direction—

I. IS A SOLUTION TO ONE OF THE GREATEST DIFFICULTIES IN CONNECTION WITH PRAYER. 1. *Answers are apparently withheld because they have already been granted and we do not realize it.* 2. *Further blessing is denied because that actually received has been wasted or despised.*

II. DISCOVERS A COMMON SOURCE OF WEAKNESS AND WANT IN SPIRITUAL LIFE. 1. *We have not enough because there has been carelessness and waste.* 2. *We have not enough (or abundance) because we have been selfish.* There has been no desire to keep what has been received for others.

III. TEACHES US GREAT HUMILITY AND GRATITUDE IN THE USE OF SPIRITUAL SUPPLIES.—M.

Vers. 45—52.—*Jesus walking on the sea*. I. THE SERVANTS OF THE LORD ARE EXPOSED TO OPPOSITION AND DANGER IN CARRYING OUT HIS COMMANDS.

II. WITHOUT THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF HIS PRESENCE DIFFICULTY APPEARS INSURMOUNTABLE.

III. HE IS EVER AT HAND TO BLESS THOSE WHO ARE STRIVING TO OBEY HIS WORD.

IV. WHEN HIS SERVANTS ARE READY TO RECEIVE HIM HE WILL COME TO THEIR RESCUE, AND EVERY OBSTACLE WILL BE OVERCOME.

V. SUCH TEMPTATIONS ARE INTENDED TO DISCOVER THEIR NEED OF HIM, AND TO CONFIRM THEIR FAITH IN HIM.—M.

Vers. 45—52.—*Jesus walking on the sea: interpreted of the Church*. I. EVANGELICAL TYPES. The vessel and crew represent the Church of Christ; the sea, the variable circumstance of world-life; the voyage, the commission of the Church from her Lord; the storm, the adverse spirit of the world; the apparition, the spiritual advent of our Lord into the heart and mind of his Church; Capernaum—Christ’s “own city”—the city of God, to which the Church brings all true believers.

II. SPIRITUAL LESSONS. 1. *The Church of Christ, in discharge of her great mission, must be separate from the spirit of worldliness.* The crowd left upon the darkening shore was animated by the unconverted, carnal mind that cannot understand the things of God; but it must nevertheless be ministered to. This mind is full of unspiritual interpretations of the mission and person of Christ (cf. John vi. 14,

15). But Christ himself, from whom the disciples were parted, was not yet manifested to themselves as the Son of God and Saviour of the world. He was as yet, so far as their conceptions of him were concerned, the "Christ after the flesh" of whom Paul spoke, and therefore but an element or phase of that world-spirit with which he had been associated in the miracle of the loaves and fishes. These together represent, then, the forms the world-spirit assumes, and through which it endeavours to work. 2. *The Church's distress arises from various causes, external and internal, but chiefly the latter.* (1) *The opposition of the world-spirit*, increasing as the direction of the vessel becomes more determinate, and developing bitterness, fury, and persecution. Against these the Church strives. (2) *Inward sources of disquietude and weakness.* The conception of Christ carried away by the disciples was in large measure a fleshly one, and a worldliness struggles within the heart of believers. The first stages of Christian life in the individual and in the historic Church are marked by low ideas of the person and work of Christ, producing estrangement from him, fear, and weakness. 3. *The deliverance of the Church consists in receiving Christ "after the spirit," in faith and communion.* This advent is supernatural. It is out of the eternal calm, spiritual elevation, and moral stability of the mountain of Divine communion. Advancing to and with his people through the turmoil of world-life, he is at hand to bless according to the measure of reception accorded him, ready to reveal himself to them that look for him and cry to him, and proving himself the One who "overcometh the world." This spiritual Christ (not an apparition, though appearing to the superstitious fear and ignorance of the Church as such) is the true, substantial, and eternal Christ, who will work out an instant and complete salvation for his people, perfecting their spiritual life, and leading them to their journey's end.—M.

Vers. 45—52.—*Christ's retirement.* There are three essential elements discernible—withdrawal from man, approach to God, and return to man.

I. SEASONS OF PRIVACY AND RETIREMENT ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE SPIRITUAL WELFARE OF THOSE WHO HAVE MUCH PUBLIC LIFE AND WORK.

II. A GREAT MINISTRY MUST BE SUSTAINED BY CONSTANT, PROFOUND DEVOTIONS.

III. THE PRAYER OF THE SAINT IS AS HELPFUL AND NECESSARY TO THE WELFARE OF OTHERS AS HIS PRACTICAL WORK.

Or—

I. DIFFICULT OF ATTAINMENT. Much publicity jarred and fretted his nature. Yet he could not be rude or unkind. The multitude must be sent home; the disciples required to be removed from the dangerous excitement of the scene. "Constrained"—"sendeth the multitude away." Only Christ could do this, and at what cost! His rest must be legitimately won, and therefore no duty or kindness is neglected.

II. A NECESSITY OF HIS SPIRITUAL NATURE.

III. UTILIZED IN THE HIGHEST OCCUPATIONS.

IV. BROKEN IN UPON BY HUMAN SYMPATHIES AND SOLITUDES.—M.

Vers. 53—56.—*Secondary benefits of the gospel.* I. THESE ARE GENERALLY ITS FIRST RECOMMENDATION.

II. THE END THEY ARE MEANT TO SERVE. 1. *To draw men to Christ.* 2. *To demonstrate that the gospel—the Christ—blesses the whole man and the whole life.*

III. THEIR SNARE AND DANGER.—M.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Jesus, the rejected Teacher.* When the evangelist states, in the preceding verse, that Jesus "went out from thence," he is referring not so much to the house of Jairus as to the town of Capernaum. Thence he went forth to the village of Nazareth, in whose fields he had often played as a child, and in whose houses and streets he had laboured as a man. In the world, yet not of it. On a certain sabbath day he preached in the synagogue (for Nazareth possessed but one), where he had worshipped in his childhood with Mary, and which he had afterwards attended as a village artisan. St. Luke records the address he delivered, in which he proclaimed himself to be the Messenger of comfort of whom Isaiah had spoken. This only led to his rejection and to a brutal attempt upon his life, so that the Nazarenes unconsciously

justified Nathanael's question, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" In a true and lofty sense, the Lord was the Representative of his brethren, the Ideal to which they are to be conformed. From what he was and from what he experienced, we may constantly learn something respecting ourselves. We are reminded by this scene of the following truths:—

I. THAT WE DO NOT ALWAYS FIND ENCOURAGEMENT WHERE WE MOST NATURALLY LOOK FOR IT. If there was a place in Palestine where the Lord might have fairly anticipated a welcome, it was Nazareth. Other cities might suspect him, when he came to them as a stranger, but in Nazareth he had been known for years. There had never been an act of unkindness done by him, or a word of evil uttered by his stainless lips. With gentleness greater than a woman's, with bravery loftier than a hero's, he had walked uprightly and lovingly amongst this people. Cast out elsewhere, he ought to find shelter and be surrounded by love and loyalty here. He came as King Alfred came among his Saxons: when overwhelmed by superior forces, he yet refused to bate one jot of heart and hope. He came, as we come sometimes from places where we have been suspected or wronged, to the home where we believe the best will be made of us. But even Nazareth cast him out. Truly, he was "despised and rejected of men." It is enough for the servant that he be as his Master. Sometimes, like him, we may suffer from want of sympathy where we confidently expected it. Possibly, for example, you are brought to serious thought; you feel that the world passes away, and the lust thereof; you are conscious that there is around you a spiritual world, for which you are utterly unprepared. Filled with anxiety and distress, you venture to open your heart to those at home; but, although it is nominally a Christian home, you are laughed at for your pains, or are recommended change and cheerful society. But you feel that it is not this you want, when your "heart and flesh cry out for the living God." Whenever, under such circumstances, you are tempted to anger or discouragement, lift up your thoughts to him who was tempted even as you are, and yet was without sin.

II. THAT MAN IS NOT THE MERE CREATURE OF CIRCUMSTANCES. The Son of God was in one sense infinitely removed from us, yet in his human relations he was "made like unto his brethren." And he, in all his purity and devoutness, came forth from a town notorious for its ignorance and degradation. He grew up there as a sweet flower does upon a heap of refuse, drawing nourishment to itself from the reeking soil, and transmuting it into beauty and fragrance by the power of its own life. So has it been with many of his followers. No man is absolutely dependent upon the place in which he is born or educated for what he is. He has a God-given individuality. Besides the external training, there is also an inward education, which is more productive of result. Examples of this are seen in social life. There are some who are envied now for their circumstances of abundance, who were not born in them. They have had many an effort and many a failure, but have been faithful and hopeful throughout. They started with few advantages, were sent early to business, had but slight education; yet, with a sense of independence of man, linked with a consciousness of dependence upon God, they have risen above their former mean surroundings. Thus is it in the moral and religious sphere. You must not suppose that, because you have not a Christian home, you are "committed to do" some abominations; or that, because you live out of sight of the worse forms of degradation and irreligion, you are discharged of all responsibility in regard to these. Circumstances are not to mould you, but you are to rule and triumph over them; and, by the grace of God, may come forth from a despised and degraded condition as one of the kingly sons of God.

III. THAT NO MAN IS DEGRADED BY COMMON WORK. "Is not this the carpenter?" What right has he to assume the position of a teacher? Yet these Jews were for the most part more sensible in their views of manual work than many Englishmen. It was the custom amongst them even for rabbis to learn some handicraft. But then, as now, it was one thing to be a learned man with power to turn to manual occupations for amusement, and quite another thing to earn bread by it, and in the intervals of labour to teach others. This is what Jesus did. Whether, as Justin Martyr reports, he made ploughs for the husbandmen or not, at least it is certain that the Builder of the heavens and the earth humbled himself to so lowly a condition that his neighbours could say of him, "Is not this the carpenter?" or, as Matthew puts it, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" He had fallen in with Joseph's condition, and had recognized his own as being marked out

for him by his reputed father's choice. Often our work is so settled for us, and our plans and preferences are thus altered by others, or rather through them by him who appoints for every man the bounds of his habitation. Sometimes, for example, a young fellow has entered on the study of the law; but his father dies, and leaves a business on the continuance of which the livelihood of the widow and younger children depends. All the cherished prospects of life are then rightly sacrificed upon the altar of love and duty. It would not be right to dissipate the work of another's life, especially if it were that of one's own father; and if the business be one in which you could serve others and serve God, let it be undertaken heartily and gladly. Let there be no department of life-work in which you would be unwilling to bend your back for the heaviest burden. All such occupations Christ has touched and sanctified and honoured, so that in them "whatsoever you do, you may do it heartily, as unto the Lord."—A. R.

Vers. 3-5.—"*They were offended in him.*" Whether the narratives of the three synoptic evangelists refer to one visit to Nazareth or to two visits, is a question which has been eagerly discussed. Give suggestions for the settlement of the dispute. Possibly such discrepancies were allowed to exist that we might care less for the material, and more for the spiritual element in the Gospels; that we might concern ourselves less with external incidents in the life of Jesus, and more with the Christ who liveth for evermore. Those who rejected our Lord at Nazareth have their followers in the present day, who are influenced by similar motives. Let us discover the reasons and the results of their conduct.

I. INDIFFERENCE TO CHRIST SOMETIMES ARISES FROM FAMILIARITY WITH HIS SURROUNDINGS. The inhabitants of an Alpine village live for years under the shadow of a snow-clad mountain, or within hearing of a splendid fall which comes foaming down its rocky bed; but they do not turn aside for a moment to glance at that which we have come many miles to see. This indifference, bred of familiarity, characterized the Nazarenes. They had known the great Teacher as a child, and had watched his growth to manhood. He did not come upon them out of obscurity, as a startling phenomenon demanding attention; but they knew the education he had received, the teachers at whose feet he had been sitting, the ordinary work he had done, etc. Jesus himself acknowledged the influence of this, when he said, "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." We warn our hearers against similar peril; for there are many who have known their Bibles from childhood, who remember the old pictures which at first aroused some interest in it, who have attended public worship for years, and yet their lives are prayerless, and it may be said of them, "God is not in all their thoughts." Beware of that familiarity with sacred things which will deaden spiritual sensibility. Most of all, let us who think and speak and work for Christ pray that our hearts may ever be filled with light and love, and may be kept strong in spiritual power.

II. CONTEMPT FOR CHRIST SOMETIMES SPRINGS FROM ASSOCIATION WITH HIS FRIENDS. "Is not this . . . the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?" Possibly there was nothing known about them which was in antagonism to the truth and purity Jesus proclaimed, but as there was nothing wonderful about them, it was the more difficult to believe there was anything Divine about him. Far more reasonably, however, does the world misjudge our Lord because of what is seen in us. Earthly, ordinary, and spiritually feeble as we are, we nevertheless represent him. He speaks of truth, and is "the Truth," yet sometimes the world asks concerning his disciples, "Where is their sincerity and transparency?" We profess to uphold righteousness, yet in business, and politics, and home-life we sometimes swerve from our integrity. Let there be but living witnesses in the world such as by God's grace we might become, and through whom there should be the outgoings of spiritual power, and then society would be shaken to its very foundations. When the rulers saw the boldness of Peter and John—the moral change wrought in these Galilean peasants—"they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus;" and "seeing the man who had been cured" standing beside them, as the result of their work, "they could say nothing against it."

III. THE REJECTION OF CHRIST BRINGS ABOUT A WITHDRAWAL OF HIS INFLUENCE. "He could there do no mighty work." He *could* not. His power was omnipotent, but

it conditioned itself, as infinite power always does in this world; and by this limitation it was not lessened, but was glorified as moral and spiritual power. In Nazareth there was an absence of the ethical condition, on the existence of which miracles depended—an absence, namely, of that faith which has its root in sincerity. If we have that, all else is simplified; if we have it not, we bind the hands of the Redeemer, who *cannot* do his mighty work, of giving us pardon and peace, because of our unbelief. Christ marvels at it. He does not wish to leave us, but he must; and old impressions become feebler, the once sensitive heart becomes duller, and we become “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” “To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” Nevertheless, he leaves not himself without a witness. If he must quit Nazareth, he will go “round about the villages teaching,” encircling the town with the revelations of power which it will not receive into its midst. And though he “can do no mighty work” such as Capernaum had seen, he will lovingly “lay his hands upon a few sick folk,” who in an unbelieving city have faith to be healed. “Thou despisest not the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of such as be sorrowful.”—A. R.

Vers. 7—12.—Preparations for preaching. From amongst his disciples our Lord selected a few who were to be in a peculiar sense his representatives and ambassadors, and they have had their successors in all the ages of Christendom. Mark significantly says, “Then Jesus *began* to send them forth;” for ever since that day he has been giving similar work, and qualifying similar representatives. A study of their characteristics and of their instructions may be profitable to us.

I. THEY WERE TO GO FORTH FROM THE PRESENCE OF JESUS. All the apostles had accompanied with him, and so had heard his instructions and been witnesses of his work. This qualified them for their mission. They were not to teach dogmas which might be read up as for an examination, but they were to tell of a life, of a person, of a death, of a man through whom they had known God. Hence Jesus “called them to be with him,” and then sent them forth. This principle has always prevailed in the Church. Moses would never have proclaimed God’s Law, or known it, unless he had gone into his presence on Sinai. Elijah would never have dared to attempt what he did, had he not been able to realize the truth of his often-uttered declaration, “The Lord God of Israel, before whom I stand!” These disciples could not have spoken as they did, unless they had been with Jesus. So, if we merely get up certain facts or theories, and rehearse them in the audience of the people, without ever having a sense of our Lord’s nearness, our work will be a spiritual failure. First let us come and see the Lord in the temple, as Isaiah did, and when we hear his voice, and have our tongue touched with a live coal from off the altar, we shall be ready to say, “Here am I; Lord, send me.”

II. THEY WERE TO BE WILLING TO WORK TOGETHER. “He began to send them forth by two and two,” for their mutual encouragement and help. Show the advantage of Christian friendship and fellowship. We lose spiritual culture by the isolated condition of Christian life. United work does not always bring pleasure, but it always brings discipline, often through the trials which come from incompatibility of temperament. Picture to yourself the experience of the disciple who was appointed by our Lord to have Judas Iscariot as his companion. Simon the Cananaean would see and lament his growing selfishness and avarice; he would fear to weaken his influence or damage his reputation among strangers, and yet would feel he must be loyal both to Judas, and his Lord. What self-control this would beget! what charity, which would shut its eyes to evil to the very last! what discipline of self! what earnestness of prayer for guidance! And if an unpleasant companionship may be thus fruitful, much more may the companionship that is pleasant become so, if it be the appointment of the Lord. When two young people agree to link their destinies for weal or woe, to bear with each other’s failings, and to strengthen one another’s hands, it is a happy thing when they can say and feel, that “the Lord Jesus sent them forth by two and two.”

III. THEY WERE TO BE CONTENT WITH THE USE OF MORAL INFLUENCE. On entering a town, they were not to demand accommodation from strangers by some display of miraculous power, but they were to inquire who in the town was worthy, i.e. who was receptive, being numbered amongst the devout ones who were “waiting for the consolation of Israel.” The home of such a one was to be the centre from which the

apostles worked. If their message was rejected, on leaving the place they were to "shake off the dust under their feet for a testimony against them"—an act symbolic of renunciation of influence and responsibility, and of the announcement of coming judgment. They were not to attempt to *force* men to listen and obey. Spiritual work is slow, but sure. We are not to endeavour, by the establishment of a great organization, to embrace all in a nominal Christianity, nor are we to conquer men by physical force, as Mahomet did; but are to seek lovingly and prayerfully to turn one soul from darkness to light, that it may become the source of illumination to others.

IV. THEY WERE TO EXERCISE SELF-DENIAL AND CHEERFUL TRUST IN GOD. This was the meaning of the instructions given in vers. 8, 9. They were to make no special provision for their journey, but were to go forth prepared to deny themselves; ready to live in the spirit of pilgrims; burdened with the fewest possible earthly things; free from all care, because the Father cared for them. When the Church has their spirit, she will win their results.—A. R.

Vers. 21—28.—*The murderers of John the Baptist.* The name of Herod Antipas is associated with that of our Lord on three occasions. The first is mentioned in this chapter. On the second he sends a threatening message through the Pharisees (Luke xiii. 31); and on the third, with his men of war, he mocked the world's Redeemer (Luke xxiii. 8—12). These together afford an example of the progressive nature of sin. Herod passed from superstitious fear to anger, and from anger to mockery and scorn. He "walked in the counsel of the ungodly," and "stood in the way of sinners," and at last "sat in the seat of the scornful" (Ps. i.). It appears to have been the extension of our Lord's influence, doubtless through the work of his newly appointed apostles, which aroused the interest and fear of Herod. The miracles which were wrought vividly brought before his guilty conscience the terrible crime which he had recently committed, in the murder of John the Baptist, of which Mark gives us the most graphic and detailed narrative we have. The feast described could hardly have taken place in Tiberias, but probably in some other palace close by the castle of Machærus, in which John was a prisoner. In the scene which is here portrayed we see three types of character, represented by the three chief actors in this tragedy, which are worthy of our study.

I. CONSIDER HEROD AS AN EXAMPLE OF MORAL WEAKNESS. He was the son of Herod the Great, by Malthace, a Samaritan woman, and inherited his father's vices without his vigour. Profligate and luxurious, he had no vestige of moral greatness. His language was that of a braggart, as we can see in his promise that he would give "the half of his kingdom;" as if he were a mighty Ahasuerus, whereas he was but the subordinate ruler of the small districts of Galilee and Peræa. In the scene before us we notice in him the following faults:—1. *He was disloyal to his convictions.* Impressed by John's words, he did not forsake his sins. Like Pilate, he acknowledged the innocence and dignity of his victim, yet he had not the moral courage to set him free. To know the right, and yet to fail in following it, is the germ of grosser sins. 2. *He was easily influenced by circumstances.* "A convenient day" came at last for Herodias's purpose, a time when the weak king would be inflamed by wine and lust. The tempter ever waits and watches for such occasions to effect the moral ruin of those who do not resolutely resist him. The opinion of the civil and military officials around him also prevented Herod's refusal of Salome's request. Like all moral cowards, he had more fear of the scorn of men than of the wrath of God. 3. *He was led gradually to the worst crime.* There had been a time when he would have shrunk from the murder of John; but he had been gradually prepared for it. His sinful connection with Herodias blunted any sensibility to good, as sensuality always does. His unwillingness to put her sway led him to silence the bold preacher who denounced his crime. And when licentiousness had led to persecution, it was not long before persecution led to murder. 4. *He was moulded by the stronger will of his companion in guilt.* The weakness of a vacillating man is easily overcome by one who is resolutely bad. Give examples from Scripture, and illustrations from daily life, of the perils besetting those who have no moral firmness and strength.

II. CONSIDER SALOME AS AN EXAMPLE OF ABUSED GIFTS. Physical beauty is as much God's gift as wealth, or position, or mental talent. Too often it has been used for the sake of display, for the gratification of vanity, or for the excitement of evil passions.

Many have hereby been led into moral ruin. Salome degraded herself unspeakably by coming forward in this shameless dance. Forgetting all decency and decorum, she danced "in the midst," that is, in a circle of half-intoxicated admirers. 1. *Her regal dignity was forgotten.* With amazement the historian records that it was the "daughter of Herodias herself" (not "of the said Herodias")—a princess of royal blood. Even social position and family repute may be fairly regarded as defences against sin. 2. *Her maiden modesty was sacrificed.* In modern social life Christians should set themselves against all that seems to have the slightest tendency to this. 3. *Her feminine tenderness was repudiated.* The twenty-fifth verse indicates that she eagerly shared her mother's hatred against John. But her womanly pity should have pleaded for the life of a helpless prisoner, and this God-given characteristic of her sex being trampled underfoot, made her crime the more revolting when she accepted the bleeding head of the murdered prophet.

III. CONSIDER HERODIAS AS AN EXAMPLE OF UNSCRUPULOUS WICKEDNESS. She was to Herod what Jezebel was to Ahab, or what Lady Macbeth was to her husband. 1. *Her vices were great.* Abandoned licentiousness and malignant cruelty. 2. *Her influence was disastrous* over both Herod and her own daughter Salome. She ruined herself and others too. For all such there will come a terrible awakening and retribution. "Who hath hardened himself against God, and prospered?"—A. R.

Ver. 31.—*Recreative rest.* The disciples had been teaching the people, and meeting their objections; they had been curing the sick, and had seen effects startling even to themselves. Exultant over the work they had done, they were in some danger of forgetting its spiritual issues, and needed a reminder that it was more important to have one's name in the book of life than to have power to cast out devils. Agitated, restless, and weary, they returned to their Lord, and he, understanding their deepest wants, bade them follow him into a quiet retreat, that they might rest a while. Each sabbath day should bring us also to Jesus, that he may lead us into rest.

I. RECREATIVE REST IS RECOGNIZED BY GOD AS A NECESSITY FOR MAN. We are so constituted that a constant strain on the same powers will either degrade or destroy them. The absence of physical rest would produce madness or death. But if we had only physical recreation, if there were no provision for the cultivation of the mind and of the affections, if we knew nothing of the quietude of home and the rest of the Lord's day, we should soon become little better than the beasts which perish. This revelation shows that our "Father knoweth that we have need of these things." The Holy Book is not out of the sphere of our human necessities. It is wet with the tears of the sorrowful, and thumbed by the horny hands of the toiler, and through it the Son of man still cries, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The second chapter in the Book of Genesis speaks of rest as well as of work. One of the fundamental laws given on Sinai ordained that on six days we should work, but that on the seventh we should do no manner of work. Prophecy points on to a distant future, and declares "there remaineth a rest for the people of God." There is, indeed, no true want which God has not met. If the feeblest of his creatures requires food of a certain kind, it is placed beside it from the first. The butterfly, for example, which we sometimes use as a type of carelessness, deposits her eggs by unerring instinct where the young caterpillars may find their proper food. And the God who giveth to each his food sees that we want rest, and provides for it. When our day's work is done, and we are tired, weariness provides and fits for repose, and "the sleep of the labouring man is sweet." When we are in danger of becoming hard and worldly amid the cares of business, God places around us at home restful endearments and softening influences. And often on the sabbath day he says with effectual power, "Oh, rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him."

II. RECREATIVE REST SHOULD HAVE A JUST RELATION TO EARNEST WORK. Everything of value has its own standard. Art, for example, is of value in proportion to taste. Rest finds its value in proportion to work. The mere pleasure-seeker loses the very thing he seeks because he seeks it; for pleasure is the complement of effort, toll, and sacrifice. Rest is the shadow thrown by the substance work, and you reach the shadow when you have passed by the substance that throws it. Nothing is more pitiable than the sight of a *blase*, self-indulgent epicure, who has never done any genuine work.

and who saunters through life voting everything to be a weariness. How vivid is the contrast between his enjoyment and that of the schoolboy who comes home after passing his examination; or the man of business who rejoices to get free and renew the joys of his boyhood! The same principle applies to things spiritual. Those who have known no struggle with doubt or temptation, who have made no sacrifice for the Master, know little or nothing of the rapture which comes to others when, as they pray, there comes a burst of sunshine through the darkness. There would be more enjoyment of God's rest if only there were a more thorough doing of God's work. The converse of all this is true. Legitimate rest prepares for work. If an indulgence or recreation makes duty distasteful, so that we go back to it with surlily discontent, then either the pleasure has been of the wrong kind, or it has been indulged in in a wrong spirit. The disciples who went into the desert to rest "a while" were soon at work again, and their retirement with Christ had increased their knowledge and power. Such should be the effect of each sabbath day. Its morrow should find us endued with more courage, patience, and hope, in our daily toil. The rest at Elim was as important for Israel as the march from the Red Sea.

III. RECREATIVE REST IS INTENDED TO EXERCISE A WHOLESOME INFLUENCE ON CHARACTER. Many questions are asked concerning various forms of recreation, whether for Christians they are legitimate or not. Incidentally some tests have already been suggested. What is their effect upon the work of life? Do they fit us for doing it better, or do they lead us to turn from it with loathing? And what is their effect on Christian work? Is that more, or is it less hearty, devout, and spiritual, because of our pleasure-taking? But, besides these, there is a more subtle test to be found in the effect of recreation on character. Rightly chosen and enjoyed, it may do much to supply our personal deficiencies. We are seeking to become men in Christ Jesus—to have all the possibilities of manhood, so far as they are innocent, developed and strengthened, and not to have a few characteristics abnormally strong. If we are becoming stern in our fight with difficulties, the relaxations of home-life should make us considerate and gentle. It is well that there is a time to laugh, as well as a time to weep; and that God sends us that which will lift us out of the narrow groove in which the uniformity of life would keep us. If recreation is to have the effect on character which is highest and best, it must be enjoyed in conscious fellowship with Christ. The final test about any doubtful recreation would be—Would Christ share this? Is it he who has said, "Come ye apart with me, and rest a while"? We rejoice in the belief that he does share in our recreations. He is with us under the whispering trees, and beside the sea as it rolls in upon the shore. He walks with us, as of old, across the corn-fields, and beside the hedgerows, with their marvellous wealth of life and beauty; and as we commune together he bids us think of the minuteness and tenderness of our Father's care. To many weary disciples he still is saying, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while."—A. R.

Ver. 41.—*Christian care for the needy.* Observe the contrast between this feast on the mountain and the festival just alluded to in the palace of Herod. There self-indulgence, folly, and guilt prevailed; here the necessities of the body were generously met, and hungry souls were satisfied and gladdened. Describe the scene. Let us learn some of the lessons here inculcated by him who on all occasions was an example to his disciples.

I. WE SHOULD DEVOUTLY RECOGNIZE GOD IN THE SUPPLY OF EARTHLY WANTS. When our Lord came here he found religion divorced from common things. It had become a matter of ceremonies, of place and time, of ecclesiastical fast and feast, and therefore one of the main purposes of his teaching and miracles was to associate God with everything in men's thoughts. He worked as a carpenter, and so toil was sanctified; he cured diseases, and the work of the physician and of the nurse was ennobled; he went to a wedding feast, and hallowed marriage; he blessed little children, and directed their joys heavenward; he spoke of lilies in the field, of corn white unto the harvest, of birds nestling in the trees, and so made nature vocal with God's teaching; and here, when he took into his hands the bread and fish with which he would provide a labourer's meal for the hungry people, he looked up to heaven as the source whence it came, and blessed it, so that to the disciples the common meal became a sacrament.

Too often we are unmindful of this teaching, and attribute our successes to our own skill and strength. Therefore God allows some disaster to come, so that in the recognition of human helplessness Divine goodness may begin to be considered. "Lord, we cannot satisfy this great necessity," said the disciples; and as they looked despondently on the handful, he looked hopefully and thankfully to heaven, leading them to think of him who satisfies the desire of every living thing.

II. WE SHOULD ALWAYS CULTIVATE THOUGHTFUL CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS. These people, on their way to the Passover at Jerusalem, had turned aside to hear the Prophet of Nazareth. They did not profess to be his followers, although they were sufficiently interested in what they heard to remain till all their provisions were exhausted. Then the disciples thought it was time that they should depart, and were unprepared for the command, "Give ye them to eat." Our Lord was not like those Christians who withhold their sympathy from all but their fellow-believers, nor did he argue that the hungry people ought to have foreseen the difficulty, and made reasonable provision to meet it. He was the "express Image" of him who is kind to the unthankful and to the unworthy. God never withholds his beneficence till his creatures deserve it. He watches the supplanter leaving his father's house after a shameful sin, and even to him, in his merited loneliness, the heavens are opened. He hears the murmuring of the people of Israel, yet causes the manna to fall round about their camp. And when he sees no sign of the world turning to him, he sends for its redemption his only begotten Son; and "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly." The goodness of the Lord, as well his chastisement, should lead us to repentance. Through us that goodness should reveal itself to others. Jesus said of this undeserving crowd, "I have compassion on the multitude;" and so he sought to inspire his disciples with pitifulness towards all who are in need.

III. WE OUGHT WILLINGLY TO MAKE SACRIFICES FOR OTHERS EVEN WHEN OUR GIFTS SEEM INADEQUATE TO THEIR WANTS. The disciples themselves were hungry, and all that was to be had was this bread and fish which a boy in the crowd was carrying; but of it Jesus said, "Bring them hither to me." At once it was given up, though it was evident that what might have sufficed for the twelve disciples was ridiculously insufficient if divided between five thousand men, besides women and children. Yet even this, which was very small as a gift, but very great as a sacrifice, was by the Lord's blessing made enough for all. It is the sacrifice in it which constitutes the value of every offering presented to God. We might have supposed that one with infinite power would have despised so trivial a supply as this; but God always uses what man has, as far as it will go. Even under the wing of the cherubim the hand of a man must be. When man can do nothing, God does all; but when man can do anything, God requires he should do it to the utmost. The manna will cease directly it is possible to revert to the old law of sowing and reaping. It is thus with Christian enterprise. The world shall be won for Christ—not independently of human effort, but as a result of God's work through it. Concerning all that we can offer of wealth and talent and work, though it is inadequate to the world's necessity, Christ says, "Bring it hither to me."—A. R.

Vers. 45—51.—*Christ walking on the sea.* This miracle was no unmeaning portent, but was full of spiritual significance. In Scripture the people are often spoken of under the figure of the sea and its waves (Dan. vii. 3; Rev. xiii. 1). Christ had just assuaged popular passion, and now he calmed the troubled sea, which was symbolic of it. Here, then, we may see a sign of the coming dominion of the spirit of Christianity over the sea of nations. We content ourselves, however, now with learning a few truths respecting our Lord and his disciples which are exemplified here.

I. WE LEARN RESPECTING OUR LORD: 1. *Christ's disciples would send away the people who were hungry, but Christ himself sends them away when they are too well satisfied.* (Compare vera. 36, 45.) The reason for dismissing the crowd is given in John vi. 15. They were greatly excited by a miracle, repetitions of which would ensure the provisioning of armies, and the success of a revolution. Hence Christ sent them away. "He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he hath sent empty away." The prodigal is welcomed when he comes home starving and helpless. We must go to him acknowledging sin and weakness, and not confident in ourselves. 2. *Christ withdrew*

himself from earthly honours, whereas too often his disciples greedily seek them. Our Lord "constrained" his disciples to go away, for they were evidently loth to do so. It was for their good. They were in danger of becoming infected (if they were not already infected) with the spirit of the people. To them it seemed that the longed-for kingship of their Lord was within reach. But for the second time he resisted the temptation—"All this will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." And for them he answered in a most unexpected way the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." 3. *Christ left us an example of secret and earnest prayer.* He was alone with God at the close of that exciting day. The quiet of eventide calls us also to secret prayer. Our Lord hereby renewed his strength, and from it he came forth to conflict and victory. "Pray to thy Father, which is in secret." 4. *Christ is often out of our sight, but we are never out of his.* Lost to the sight of his disciples, he nevertheless "saw them toiling in rowing."

II. *WE LEARN RESPECTING HIS DISCIPLES:* 1. *We are sometimes left to toil on in darkness, without Christ's realized presence.* He leaves us alone for a time that we may feel our need of him. Though the wind may be "contrary" to us, it is a good wind if at last it brings our Saviour near. 2. *Our extremity is his opportunity.* It was about "the fourth watch of the night"—between three and six in the morning—that Jesus came; and the hours had been so long and weary since they started upon their voyage, that they must have been fast losing hope and courage. The darkest hour is just before the dawn. 3. *If our strength is insufficient to bring us to him, his strength is sufficient to bring him to us.* It was so when he redeemed the world. He came to earth because we could not climb to heaven. It is so in our special occasions of necessity. He sometimes comes for our deliverance in unexpected ways—"walking on the sea." 4. *In all our troubles Jesus says, "It is I; be not afraid."*—A. R.

VERS. 1—6.—The carpenter; or, the dignity of honest labour. "In his own country," "in the synagogue" where he had learned in his youth, he now "began to teach." There were "many" who knew him, who had seen him pass in and out amongst them, talking to them, perhaps like, yet unlike, the other growing youths and the young men working for them, an artisan—one of many. These "hearing him were astonished;" and though "the wisdom" of his teaching they could not deny, nor the "mighty works" wrought by his hands, yet, as they knew him and his relatives full well, they were "offended in him," and believed not. So easily is the poor frail heart led away from blessing by prejudice. How great was the loss of these needy Nazarenes! "He could there do no mighty work, save" (oh, wonderful reserve!) "that he laid his hands on a few sick folk, and healed them." Let us leave this unbelief for the present—it will arrest our attention again and again—and let us see the high tribute paid to the honourableness of lowly labour by this Doer of "mighty works"—this "Prophet" robbed of his "honour among his own kin, and in his own house." If labour was first imposed as a curse, it is turned truly into a blessing by this example of him who thus helped to cultivate the fields around. Here pride is truly shamed if it looks upon labour as beneath it: it was not beneath him who is above us all. Let every son of toil see in this "carpenter" the highest evidence that all handicraft is exalted to a true dignity, and that hard industry, so far from being a degradation, is honourable and honoured. Now, since the "prophet is not without honour," let not "the carpenter" be; for in this instance they are one. The occupancy of a sphere of lowly industry by Christ henceforth consecrates it as—

I. **A SUITABLE OCCUPATION OF TIME.** The responsibility of rightly occupying our time cannot be evaded. Of it, as of all other talents, an account must be rendered. 1. Diligent, honest labour is a profitable employment of time. 2. It is healthful. 3. It saves from the degenerating influence of indolence. 4. It is a source of pure and beneficent enjoyment.

II. **AS AN HONOURABLE MEANS OF MAINTENANCE.** 1. There is nothing degrading in honest toil. 2. It has its essential value in the world's great market. It deserves its fair remuneration; and, inasmuch as it is in a high degree necessary for the well-being of society, its claims are everywhere, if not always justly, recognized. 3. In a man's employment of his strength and skill in procuring what is needful for his own life and for those dependent upon him, his independence of character is preserved and his best affections stirred.

III. AS A WORTHY SERVICE TO OTHERS. By the constitution of human society, it is the plain duty of each to promote to the utmost of his ability the well-being of all others. The products of industrial toil, especially of handicraft, are useful in the highest degree. Without them the comfort of large communities must be greatly impaired. He, therefore, who is called to labour, "working with his hands" the thing that is good, is a useful and honourable servant of his race. 1. In the lowliest spheres, the loftiest powers are not necessarily degraded. The "Christ of God" was a "carpenter." 2. In those spheres the holiest sentiments may be cherished, and the holiest character remain untarnished. 3. Whilst in them the humblest labourer may know that his toil is honoured, for it was shared by his Lord.—G.

Vers. 7—13.—The apostolic commission. "The harvest truly is plenteous" and "the labourers are few," therefore "the Lord of the harvest" would "send forth labourers into his harvest." To this end "he called unto him the twelve," and gave them the grandest commission ever entrusted to man. Let us consider that commission in—

I. ITS IMPOSED CONDITIONS. 1. In company: "by two and two." Thus for mutual encouragement and help. For the heart of the strongest may fail in presence of danger, difficulties, and threatened death. 2. In poverty: "He charged them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no bread, no wallet, no money in their purse." The source of their power and influence with men was thus shown to be not of earth, while no false motives were present to draw men to them. And they, the teachers of faith in God, would be the highest examples of that faith. So in simple wisdom were they to go forth, and in every city seeking the man that was worthy, abide with him, honouring with their prayer of peace the house that judged them worthy to enter. 3. In danger: "As sheep in the midst of wolves" shall ye be. They whom ye go to bless will become your foes. "Up to councils" shall ye be delivered; "in their synagogues they will scourge you;" "before governors and kings shall ye be brought;" "hated of all men," ye shall be persecuted from city to city. 4. Yet in safety the life exposed for truth and righteousness is not wholly undefended. "The Spirit" of the "Father speaketh in" them in the hour of need; the patiently enduring "shall be saved." Even if men "kill the body," they "are not able to kill the soul;" and the Father, without whom not a sparrow shall fall on the ground, watches the minutest incident of the imperilled life—"the very hairs of your head are all numbered;" while at length the confessor of Christ among men will he also confess before his "Father which is in heaven." Moreover, in all this "the disciple" is but "as his Master"—that Master and Lord who will reward the least service done to himself, and punish their foes as his own—that Master and Lord who declared that the life lost in his cause should be most truly found.

II. ITS TRUST; or, the terms of the commission. How grand, how honourable, how precious to the world—the world of ignorant, suffering, sinful men! "He gave them authority over the unclean spirits." "As ye go," he said (Matt. x. 7, 8), "preach, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils." So the great mission has for its object the removal of the evils of human life. Its foulness, its suffering, its error, its subjugation to evil, are all to be combated. Truly this was "to preach the kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 2). Happy are the subjects of so good a King!

III. ITS LIMITATION. "Not into any way of the Gentiles, not into any city of the Samaritans," but solely "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," may they go. So the promises to the fathers are fulfilled. Truly "God did not cast off his people which he foreknew." Truly "all the day long" did he "spread out" his "hands" even to them who "as touching the election are beloved for the fathers' sakes." Yet "the time is at hand" when "even to the Gentiles also God will grant repentance unto life;" and out of them will he take "a people for his name." But, according to his will; the order must be observed: to "the Jew first," and, seeing he is the God of Gentiles, "also to the Gentile." Yet, "let the children first be filled."

IV. ITS SUCCESS. "And they went out, and preached that men should repent," and they preached the gospel, and cast out devils, and healed the sick. Few and simple are these words; yet do they declare conquests greater than armies could gain, and works of service to men that lift these labourers to a pitch of unapproachable honour. When the world is won to true wisdom, these men and their works shall be magnified above every other; and when the Church awakes to her true wisdom, she will see that

herein is the pattern for all time of the chief principles by which the kingdom of God is to be extended in the earth.—G.

Vers. 14—29.—*Herod: the disordered conscience.* The fame of the disciples reaches the ears of Herod, and has the effect of recalling to him a shameful deed of blood with which his memory is charged, and leads him, in contradiction to his Sadducean professions, to declare, "John, whom I beheaded; he is risen." 'Thua two diverse characters are brought near together. There are others in view, but they are not prominent. There is the royal dancer, with her skilfulness and obedience, sacrificing her high prospects—"unto the half of my kingdom"—to the foul wish of her mother. We see her visage of corrupt loveliness, over which a cloud gathers, settling on her heated brow, as she finds that her whole reward is to be a gory dish; and we see the half-exposed coarseness of her unmaidenly spirit, which could receive and carry the bleeding head and lay it at her mother's feet. That mother—no. Alas, to what depths can poor human nature descend! Few words are needed to describe the two principal figures. The peace, the serenity, and the brightness of a heavenly life in the one, standing beside the darkness—the pitchy black darkness—of evil in the other. One a rough man from the wilderness, but the chosen herald of the great King, of whom it was declared that of all born of women a greater than he had not been. A great man, yet humble and meek; not worthy to loose the sandals of his Master's shoes, yet brave enough to reprove a wicked prince to his face. This was one. The other is that prince, the representative of a licentious court in a licentious age, big with the pride of conquest, yet trembling from fear of the people. A mixture of coarse animal courage with the weakness and vacillation which indulgence brings. But a man with a conscience. His heart a dungeon, across whose dark gloom shoots one ray of light. Little is said of John—very few words; a mere profile. "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." What faithfulness! What brave fearlessness! Good men and brave always bear testimony to the authority of law. "It is not lawful" is a prickly hedge on either side of the path of life. Once more of John, bringing Herod more into view. "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous man and a holy, and kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was much perplexed; and he heard him gladly." So the silent power of a holy life is declared by the example of its influence over this reprobate. Into the darkest chambers of that dark heart this ray penetrates. And the words of warning and teaching alternately please and pain—"he was much perplexed." Herod is evidently a weak man. He is impressible, but he lacks firmness of character—the hardness of texture that retains the impression of the hand laid upon it. He yields to good, but it is not lasting; he yields equally to evil. He is sufficiently alive to the claims of holiness to pay them tribute, but not sufficiently so to prevent the rage of passion. He is open to the appeals of a holy life; not less to the demands of a dancing-girl. He fears John, and he fears public opinion. He is weak—that weakness which is wickedness. He would give half his kingdom to a girl whose dance delighted him, and he would give the head of the man whom in his heart he honours to satisfy her demands. True, he was sorry—"exceeding sorry;" "but for the sake of his oaths, and of them that sat at meat, he would not reject her." Oh, what noble fidelity! Oh, what honour! Yet has he not sufficient fidelity to truth to say, "Over that man's life I have no power;" nor honour enough to say, "That head is not mine to give." What an unbalanced spirit! what a turbulent sea! This character reveals—

I. THE NECESSITY FOR A RULING PRINCIPLE IN LIFE; "the single eye," which, while it gives unity to the whole character, preserves by its simplicity from the entanglements of temptation.

II. THE NECESSITY FOR PROMPT DECISION, BASED UPON PRINCIPLES ACKNOWLEDGED BY CONSCIENCE.

III. THE DUTY OF AN UNQUESTIONING SUBMISSION TO THE LAW OF RIGHT.

IV. And it teaches the terrible lesson that THE HABITUAL INDULGENCE IN ONE SIN WILL UNDERMINE THE WHOLE STRENGTH OF MORAL CONVICTION AND SENSE OF RIGHT.—G.

Vers. 30—44.—*The miracle of the loaves.* The apostles, having returned to Jesus after their first tour of healing and preaching, relate to him "all things whatsoever they had done, and whatsoever they had taught." Touched with consideration for them,

Jesus withdraws them "apart into a desert place, to rest a while." But they could not be hid. The people saw them departing, and gathered, "from all the cities, a great multitude." To the eye of the Merciful they were "as sheep not having a shepherd," and his deepest sympathies were touched. "He had compassion on them," and he "healed their sick," and he became the Shepherd of their souls, and "began to teach them many things." So the day passes and the evening draws nigh, and the disciples in their fear desire him to send the people away to "buy themselves something to eat," little knowing that the source of all was near at hand. Jesus' demand to the disciples to "give them to eat" quickly evoked the demand, "Shall we go and buy?" for little recked they that "five loaves" and "two fishes" could feed so great a multitude. But he, "looking up to heaven, blessed," and that for which he blessed was blessed; and he brake, and still he brake, for probably the increase was in his hands. "And they did all eat, and were filled." So the insufficiency of our poor human resources is shown to be no hindrance to the accomplishment of the great Divine purposes; and the folly of having regard to our means alone is strikingly shown. Five loaves, with his blessing who gives bread daily, are ample to meet the wants of a multitude. In those five loaves were the apostles—so small a band—represented. How could they meet the needs of the world? But he would meet that need, and with but a little Church, a few apostles, and a few writings; and this he foreshadowed. The ground of the world's hope lies in his compassion and his means of help. But the miracle stands for ever to condemn the fear of those who think that the time must come when the fields will be insufficient to feed the nations of men. The "compassion" which then saw the multitudes will still be awake, and the power which could feed that multitude on a few cakes will in all time give daily bread for the asking. To fear in the presence of God for our life, what we shall eat, is as grave a fault as to fear him is a lofty virtue. The miracle is a doing in an unusual way what at all other times is done by well-known and ordinary methods—methods that are so regular in their orderly succession we are led to depend upon them as unfailing; and we call them "laws of nature."

I. It teaches us (if we did not otherwise know it) that all feeding is from the Divine hand.

II. It declares that God feeds men in tenderness and compassion. The bread comes to the thoughtful, made savoury with the Divine goodness.

III. It points us to those many processes of nature which are (like the disciples in this account) the hands of the servants of his will to bear to us God's gifts.

IV. It shows to us that, in all God's good gifts to us, the littleness of the human means and of natural resources is no hindrance to the fullest satisfaction of our wants.

V. It illustrates to us that in God's house economy reigns, and that with all plentifulness there is to be no waste—nothing lost. His gifts are precious in his own sight at least.

VI. And it quietly teaches the duty of a thankful reception of all he bestows—praising God for his gifts, which speedily returns as a blessing upon the gift.

But though this miracle met the bodily wants, and though it teaches its good lessons concerning the care that in compassion gives daily bread to the needy, yet it has its lofty spiritual aspect. It leads our wondering and admiring thoughts up to him who is the Bread of life to the world, and the very Life itself. And it demands from disciples that they catch the spirit of their Master, and in compassion care for every multitude in every place that "is desert."—G.

Vers. 1—6.—*Christ at home.* I. THE WONDROUS IN EVERY-DAY LIFE. When they heard him in the synagogue they were "much struck," Mark says. Where did all this wisdom come from? So does the parent wonder at the sayings of the child. "Where did he get such thoughts?" The boy goes from the village, and soon comes back to astonish the gossip, with his broad views of life and his easy and confident manners. Experience is full of these surprises. Nothing is more astonishing now than the empire which the Child of Nazareth sways in the world of thought and conduct.

II. THE JEALOUSY OF HOME-GROWN GREATNESS. The people of Nazareth stumbled at Jesus. So are our thoughts under the tyranny of custom. If one should tell us that our little son or brother was great, we should find it hard to believe. 'Tis wondrous

of faith in the living God, who works wherever, whenever, howsoever he wills. Beware of that narrow egotism which even now may be shutting us out from light and beauty, divinity and blessedness.

III. THE MOST INVINCIBLE OF OBSTACLES IS THE WILL OF MAN. How deep was the truth of the saying, that against stupidity even the gods fight in vain! There was sarcasm in the saying of Jesus (ver. 4). Often has it been repeated. He "wondered at their want of faith." Full of faith and love himself, 'twas hard to understand the want of response to it. "He was not able to do any work of power there." Ask, when the business of the kingdom does not seem to be going forward (except on a small scale, ver. 5), whether the cause may not be want of wish, want of will, want of prayer.—J.

Vers. 7—13.—*Missionaries.* I. MISSIONARIES MUST NOT BE, AS A RULE, SOLITARY MEN. For counsel, defence, cheerfulness, "two are better than one." Without artificially imitating this example, in natural and quiet ways it will be found good to follow.

II. MISSIONARIES, AS A RULE, MUST BE FRUGAL MEN. No luxuries; bare necessaries compose their outfit. It is like the soldier in "marching order," or the exploring traveller. Luxury is a relative term, but the Christian minister will always put it in a secondary place.

III. MISSIONARIES, AS A RULE, MUST NOT BE SEDENTARY MEN. They are sent with a witness. They must deliver a few clear statements, sound a blast upon the trumpet that calls to repentance, and then forward again. The rule for the pastor is very different. We must try to understand our call.

IV. MISSIONARIES, AS A RULE, MUST ACT DIRECTLY UPON THE CONSCIENCE OF MEN. This is a great canon, and a mark of distinction between the missionary and the pastor. "They, departing, proclaimed that men should repent." A fresh voice, delivering this word, "Repent!" with intensity and power, will awaken echoes. But, repeated in the same place by the same person, the effect must wear off. Solid and continuous instruction then is needed. The teacher must sow where the exhorter has broken up the fallow ground.—J.

Vers. 14—16.—*Wonder and fancy.* Incidentally how much light on human nature do we gain from the Gospels!

I. PERSONAL FORCE ALWAYS ATTRACTS ATTENTION. The man cannot be hidden. Even the "lion" of the hour merely is an expression of spiritual force. Who is he? Whence came he?

II. THE POPULAR CONSCIENCE RECOGNIZES THE FORCE OF CHARACTER. They felt that something new had come into the world of thought and feeling. It is always worth while taking note of the direction of popular interest. Herod learned much from the people. However wide of the mark their conjectures as to the personality of Jesus might be, their instinctive recognition of his greatness was unerring.

III. THE SUPERSTITION OF THE BAD MAN. It is often seen that unbelief and superstition, as in the expressive language of the Germans, *Unglaube* and *Aberglaube*, are generally found together, springing from one root. The truth is, that in an idle, voluptuous mind any sort of thought springs up, ripe as weeds in warmth and rain. The only way to think truly is to feel purely and act rightly.—J.

Vers. 17—29.—*The hero's death.* I. THE HERO OF CONSCIENCE CONTRASTED WITH THE VOLUPTUARY. The former chooses to be true and loyal to the right rather than to live; the latter postpones everything to "life," in the lowest and most sensual acceptance of the word. Yet the wicked man involuntarily respects the good man.

II. THE SLAVE OF SPURIOUS HONOUR CONTRASTED WITH THE SERVANT OF THE TRUTH. Herod excuses his violent deed; nay, he pretends that it is required in order to satisfy his word as a man of honour. Such a one as his victim would never have given his word in such a case.

III. THE TRUE PARTS OF MEN IN LIFE OFTEN SEEM TO BE REVERSED. John loses his head at the order of Herod. The sublime hero bows before the weak tyrant. So is it

in the "whirligig of time." Unless we keep our eye firmly fixed on the unseen and spiritual, it may appear that all things are turned upside down. But there is only one relation of things, and that is God's. Herod is really to be pitied. Over John is extended the shield of omnipotence, and in the very moment of his violence Herod is most weak. (Compare R. Browning's poem, 'Iustans Tyrannus'.)—J.

Vers. 30—34.—*Rest and work.* I. THERE IS NO TRUE REST WHICH HAS NOT BEEN EARNED BY WORK.

II. THE DUTY OF RESTING HAS THE SAME REASONS AS THE DUTY OF WORKING.

III. SOLITUDE IS THE PROPER REFRESHMENT AFTER PUBLIC WORK, AND PREPARATION FOR IT.

IV. THE SPIRIT CAN NEVER BE AT LEISURE FROM COMPASSION, SYMPATHY, AND LOVE.—J.

Vers. 35—44.—*The multitude fed.* I. THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST. It is for the body as well as the soul. The foundation of work upon the soul is cure for the body. It is contrasted with the disciples' carelessness. Their spirit is that which leads men to get rid of irksome duty. "Send them away!" Let them shift for themselves. Christ's example teaches that where a want is seen, those who see it should be the first to seek to supply it.

II. LOVE IS RICH IN RESOURCES. It seemed a physical impossibility to feed those thousands without bread, without money. This beautiful story, like that of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath in the old time, teaches that "a little may go a long way." If the best use is made of existing means, they will be found insensibly to multiply; not always by what we term a "miracle," i.e. some process out of the ordinary operation of law, but in accordance with law, which may be better.

III. METHOD IN BENEFICENCE. The multitude is broken up and distributed in parties, as if in preparation for a grand banquet. The spirit of love and goodness works by method. When we introduce order into our works, we reflect the law of Heaven and imitate the thought of God. Waste of material and waste of labour is generally for want of this.

IV. IN GOD'S FEASTS THERE IS EVER ENOUGH AND TO SPARE. The people were not only satisfied, but there was enough left to furnish forth a future repast. The whole is a parable of the truths and laws of the Spirit. Love is the deepest root of social and political economy. It teaches the value of means, in view of the greatness of the ends. It stimulates prudence and calculation. For the individual, the complaint is generally not sound, that he has "not enough to live on." To reduce wants is the same as to increase means, and is a sure secret of wealth. For the community, the far-reaching and benevolent wisdom of the legislature may avail more than mere abundance of harvests. With order, religious principle, liberality and frugality, the tables of the people will be furnished with bread. To cheapen the means of living and oppose war is the duty of the Christian politician.—J.

Vers. 45—52.—*The vision on the lake.* I. THE FRAILTY OF FAITH. 1. In loneliness, Jesus had gone away. The disciples were in the middle of the lake, amidst a stormy sea. It is a picture of a life-experience. In loneliness we sink into weakness and cowardice, having been brave in the fellowship and under the contagious influence of superiors. 2. In the withdrawal of its Object from the field of vision. They could not see Christ. We want to see, when the whole need is that we should trust. We want to unite incompatible things; willing to trust so soon as we see a good prospect of safety; cast down with apprehension when the inner sight, kept clear, would open its vista of cheering hope. Those men were yet to learn, in the language of one of them, to "believe in the Saviour, though now we see him not."

II. TERROR AT THE SUPERNATURAL. They saw Jesus passing, and were terrified, for they thought it was a ghost. Involuntary fear in the presence of the supernatural is the symptom of our weak and dependent nature. When Jesus appeared as Jesus, he drove all fear away; when he passed into the *chiaro-oscuro* of perception, standing as it were in a region intermediate between earth and heaven, as here on the lake, as on the Mount of Transfiguration, terror fell upon their souls. Fear in the mind reflects the

presence of God. Modified by intelligence, purified from superstition, fear passes into that reverence which is the ground-tone of religious feeling.

III. THE TERRORS OF GOD CONCEAL HIS LOVE. Behind the tempest is his "smiling face." The voice of the Comforter and Saviour of man speaks from the dread apparition of the lake. So from out the mystic scenes of nature, the Alpine tempest and avalanche, the mountainous swelling of the sea, and all human changes and turbulences of history, speaks a voice, clear, calm, and still, if we will but hearken, like that which greeted Elijah: "Have courage; it is I. Child of man, I love thee; rest on me and be at peace." It is when we realize that we are members of the kingdom of spirit and under the protection of its Head, that we can defy the "wild deluge of cares." It is not because God is not near to us, or that help is not available, that we tremble and feel forlorn; it is because, like the disciples, our "minds have become dull."—J.

Vers. 53—56.—Commotion in Gennesaret. I. A STIR AMONG THE SICK AND THEIR FRIENDS. We read of "fashionable events" and "arrivals in the fashionable world." This was not such. The quality of a movement teaches much as to its origin. The poor and sick know their friends, and their thronging is a testimonial to worth.

II. THE PROGRESS OF HEALING AND PITY. Contrast with the progress of the conqueror or the cold pomp of royalty. Wherever Christ goes, and men come into contact with him, they are made well. Worth much is the testimony of any suffering one to the private Christian: "I am the better for seeing you; you do me more good than the doctor." There is a contagion of health as well as of disease.—J.

Vers. 1—6. Parallel passage: Matt. xiii. 54—58.—The rejection at Nazareth. I. OUR LORD'S VISIT TO NAZARETH. This chapter commences with our Lord's removal from the house of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, where he had performed the miracle recorded at the close of the last chapter; or rather from Capernaum, where the synagogue appears to have been situated. In either case he proceeded to visit his fatherland—not in the wide sense of that term, but in the narrower meaning of the township where his parents' home had been, and where his own childhood, youth, and early manhood had been spent. It is scarcely necessary to remind our readers that, while Bethlehem was the place of our Lord's nativity, and while Capernaum is called his own city, as the place of his frequent resort and the scene of so many of his mighty works, Nazareth was the place where he had been brought up. In a beautiful, basin-like valley, enclosed by some fifteen hills, was situated this place of world-wide renown. The town or village of Nazareth seems to sleep among the hills. The hills around this happy valley, as it has been called, have been compared to the petals of a rose, or the edge of a shell, with the little town on the lower slope of the western hill which rises high above, and which, from its elevation of nearly six hundred feet, commands one of the finest prospects in Palestine, with the Great Sea and Carmel on the west, the great plain of Esdraelon two miles to the south, Tabor six miles to the south-east, and Hermon's snowy summit away to the northward.

II. CAUSE OF HIS REJECTION. A previous rejection, if we mistake not, had taken place at Nazareth, and with greater violence than at this time, according to the record of St. Luke. On the previous occasion passion had impelled them; now prejudice blinds them. He had begun to address the congregation; his eloquence and oratory amazed them. He had not gone far, however, without interruption. They admit his superiority; they acknowledge his wisdom; but, in a sinister manner, they question its source and character, asking, "Whence is it? From above or below? What is it? Is it supernal or infernal? And then such mighty works are wrought by his hands! He is the instrument of some superior power—not the originating cause or author of them." Such seems to be the insinuation. Envy and jealousy were at the root of this prejudice. They canvassed the humble position of his family, and the lowly occupation of its members. "Is he not," they said, "a carpenter—a common carpenter, and the son of a carpenter—the village carpenter? Is he not a carpenter himself?" They were ignorant of the dignity of labour, and the nobility of honest toil. They overlooked the fact that Jews were wont to learn a trade, and that, according to Jewish ideas, a parent who did not have his son taught a trade was regarded as guilty of training him to dishonesty. Justin Martyr preserves the tradition of our Lord having made ploughs and

yokes and other agricultural implements. But they knew his family and friends—knew them so well that familiarity begat contempt. They knew who Mary was, Joseph having in all probability died before this time. They knew his brethren: sons of Joseph and Mary; or possibly his half-brothers—sons of Joseph by a previous marriage; if not his cousins, children of Clopas and Mary. They knew his sisters. They could not brook his great and manifest superiority. Verily envy is a green-eyed monster; and so “they were offended in him.” Our Lord, no doubt, felt all this acutely, but accounted for it by the principle embodied in the proverb, that a prophet is without honour in three circles—his neighbours, relatives, and members of his household. No wonder he could not do mighty works there; not that there was any physical inability in the Saviour himself, but the forth-putting of his power was conditioned by the faithful disposition or otherwise of his hearers. Thus Theophylact makes this want of ability relative and owing to the want of faith in the recipients. “Not,” he says, “because he was weak, but because they were faithless.” Here there was a want of receptivity to such an extent that he marvelled—not at their unbelief, but on account of it. It was not the object, but the cause (*δὲ*), of his astonishment. He wondered, as we read, at the faith of some no less than at the unbelief of others.—J. J. G.

Ver. 7—13. Parallel passages: Matt. ix. 35—38; x. 5—42; Luke ix. 1—6.—*The mission of the twelve.* I. THEIR FIRST MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE. Our Lord had already, as recorded in ch. iii., made choice of his twelve disciples, to accompany himself during their time of training, and subsequently to go forth on their apostolic mission and with indubitable credentials of their commission. The time had now come for their first brief and tentative effort in that direction. They go “forth by two and two”—in pairs (*δύο δύο*, a Hebraism for *κατὰ δύο*, or *ἀνα δύο*). The wisdom of this method is obvious for many reasons. It was the condition of true testimony according to the statement of the Old Testament, that “at the mouth of two or three witnesses every word should be established” or confirmed. Two are better than one for counsel and encouragement. Two would numerically warrant the expectation of the Divine presence in prayer, for “where two or three are met” together in God’s name, his presence is promised. In many ways two would be mutually helpful, and abundantly justify the prudence of the arrangement. Endued with miraculous power, they had no need of human recommendation; the powers they possessed were amply sufficient to certify the Divine origin of their mission; while the works of heavenly beneficence to suffering humanity were well adapted to gain them acceptance. With such abundant spiritual equipment, they received the Master’s word of command (*παρήγγειλεν*) to set out on their first expedition.

II. THEIR PHYSICAL EQUIPMENT. Their physical equipment, however, was of the scantiest kind. In fact, they were to make no special provision for themselves whatever; such provision might delay them when setting out, and impede them on their journey. Consequently they proceeded at once to their sphere of labour, without delay and encumbrance of any kind. Without staff, except the one in common or daily use—they were even expressly forbidden to acquire or *provide* for themselves (*μὴ κτήσασθε*) another in addition, or for the particular purpose of their present mission; without shoes, save the sandals they every day wore (*ὁποδεδεμένους*); without bread for immediate use; without scrip for provisions by the way, or copper in their purse to procure such; without two tunics, or under-garments,—they set out on their first mission, pensioners on the providence of God and the pious hospitality of his people.

III. THE ARRANGEMENT FOR THEIR LODGING. They were not at liberty to lodge in any or every house that might open its door to them. They were to act circumspectly in this matter, and carefully inquire, on entering a city or village, who in it was worthy. By acting without due discrimination in this particular, and lodging in disreputable quarters, they might imperil their own reputation or bring discredit on their mission. Once they had obtained a suitable stopping-place, they were not to change for another, even if the offer of a better place of sojourn or superior accommodation should tempt them to such a step. Their wants were few, their mode of life simple, and with the humblest hospitality it behoved them to be content. In case such Oriental and usual hospitality was denied them or in the event of their being refused

admittance, they were, by a significant symbolic act, to express their renunciation of all intercourse with persons guilty of such churlish rudeness or barbarous want of hospitality. They had rejected them, though they went in their Master's name; and, rejecting them, they rejected the Master who sent them, and thus cut themselves off from future opportunities of blessing.

IV. THE DOCTRINE THEY PREACHED. Above all was the great doctrine which they preached. That doctrine was repentance—the doctrine which our Lord's forerunner had proclaimed before; the doctrine which our Lord himself reiterated; the doctrine which, joined to faith, became afterwards one of the elements in that twofold apostolic testimony, when, after their Lord's resurrection and ascension, the apostles went forth, declaring "repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ." While thus busied in seeking the salvation of men's souls, they did not neglect the sufferings of the body; but cast out devils and healed the sick, using oil, if not medicinally, at least symbolically, to establish a point of contact or connection between them and their patients.—J. J. G.

Vers. 14—29. Parallel passages: Matt. xiv. 1, 2; 6—12; Luke ix. 7—9.—*The murder of the Baptist.* I. CONJECTURES ABOUT CHRIST. The name of Jesus had now attained great celebrity; it was fast becoming a household word; the cures he had effected, the demons he had ejected from human bodies, the dead he had raised—his wonderful works were on every tongue. Some detracted, others wondered, but most applauded. The missionary tour of the apostles, brief as it was, had given fresh currency and wider diffusion to reports already circulated far and near. His fame had made its way into the court of the tetrarch, and thus reached the ears of royalty itself. The personality of the great Wonder-worker was keenly canvassed; conjectures were rife on the subject. Some affirmed he was Elias, who had come as the forerunner of Messiah; others, not seeing their way to go so far as to accept him for *the* Prophet long expected, or even the precursor of that great Prophet, simply asserted he was a prophet; while some fancied that, after a long and dreary interval, a new era of prophetic activity was commencing, and so that a person like one of the old prophets had appeared.

II. CONSCIENCE STRONGER THAN CREED. Such were the conjectures afloat, and such the conflicting opinions of the people. Not so Herod; other thoughts stirred within him; something more than mere curiosity was at work in his case; he was startled—thoroughly perplexed, and quite at a loss (*διηπόρει*, St. Luke) to know what to think of the matter. In his extreme perplexity and agitation he expressed his opinion in a very surprising manner, and in the following very striking and abrupt words:—"Whom I myself beheaded—John: he is risen from the dead;" adding, "And on this account mighty powers operate in him." What a wonderful evidence of the power of conscience we have here! Herod, we have good reason to believe, was a Sadducee, for "the leaven of Herod," mentioned by St. Mark (viii. 15), is identified with "the leaven of the Sadducees" spoken of in the Gospel of St. Matthew (xvi. 6). The Sadducees denied the existence of angel or spirit, and also the resurrection of the dead; and yet this loose-living, unbelieving Sadducee fell back at once on an article of belief which he had all his life denied. The power of conscience had overmastered his creed. His guilty conscience had conjured up before him the murdered man as restored to life, and returning, as it were, with power from the spirit-world.

III. A PARALLEL CASE. A somewhat similar instance of the mighty power of that monitor within occurs in an instructive narrative in the forty-second chapter of the Book of Genesis. When Joseph, before making himself known to his brethren, had put them in ward three days, and subsequently released them on condition of retaining one as a hostage till the rest returned with their youngest brother, in proof of their good faith and of their being true men and no spies, "they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." There was nothing apparently in the circumstances of the case, unpleasant as those circumstances were, nor in the condition imposed on them, hard as it seemed, to remind them of their cruel treatment of their long-lost brother—nothing to recall his memory, absolutely nothing, save the still, small voice within; in other words, the power of a guilty conscience.

IV. THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT OCCASIONED THE BAPTIST'S DEATH. The evangelist now turns aside to narrate the circumstances that led up to the death of John the Baptist. Herod Antipas, ethnarch of Galilee and Peræa, called "tetrarch" by St. Matthew, as inheriting only a fourth part of the dominions of his father, Herod the Great, and styled "king" by St. Mark, had seduced his brother Philip's wife, with whom he was now living in an adulterous connection. The Baptist boldly but faithfully lifted up his voice against this sin, addressing earnest and repeated remonstrances to Herod; for, as we read, he kept saying (*ἔλεγε* being imperfect), "It is not lawful for thee to have her." The vindictive spirit of Herodias was roused in consequence: she resolved to have her revenge, but was unable to prevail on her husband to gratify her fully in this particular. He arrested the Baptist and imprisoned him, putting him in chains. He still, however, retained some respect for him, as a good and holy man whom he had heard often, and by whom he had been influenced to do many things; though *συντηρεῖ* rather means that Herod kept him in safety, or preserved him from Herodias's machinations, than that he esteemed him highly. Besides, state policy stood in the way of further violence. Herod shrank from the unpopularity which he was certain to incur by such a course; perhaps even worse consequences might ensue. To deprive the people of their favourite might lead to insurrection. Josephus, however, attributes the murder of John by Herod to Herod's "fear lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion." This wicked woman bided her time, harbouring her secret grudge and ill-concealed resentment (*ἐρείχεν*, equivalent to "she held fast within or cherished inward wrath," or "set herself against," Revised Version); while *ἠθέλει* implies "she had a settled desire"; but the favourable opportunity at last arrived. The king was celebrating his birthday festival by an entertainment to the magnates of his realm—high officers of the army, military tribunes, or chiliarchs, and other functionaries, civil or ecclesiastical, of distinguished rank. But besides this great assemblage of Galilean nobles and the splendour of the feast itself, a new feature was added to the entertainment. Salome, daughter of Herodias, in forgetfulness of the due decorum of her rank and the natural modesty of her sex, volunteered to play a part little better than that of ballet-girl before the assembled grandees of Galilee, and thus to heighten the enjoyment of the king's guests. The king looked on in rapture, immensely pleased by the easy condescension, and charmed with the agility and graceful movements of the fair *danseuse*. He was sensible of the sacrifice she had made in compliment to his majesty; for a Persian queen once lost her crown, and was willing to submit to the loss, rather than, at the sacrifice of her queenly or womanly modesty, to appear, even by the king's express command, in the presence of his banqueters. Being, in consequence, in a grateful, generous mood, he determined not to be outdone in magnanimity. There and then, of his own motion, he promised Salome whatever she asked, if it should amount to half his kingdom; he backed his promise by an oath, yea, by more than one, for we read of oaths (*ὀρκους*), as confirmatory of that promise. The girl was somewhat nonplussed by the largeness of the king's bounteous offer. She hesitated; but a prompter was not far to seek. She repaired to her mother, no doubt expecting direction in the matter of gold, or jewels, or diamonds, or girlish ornaments of some sort. But no; that wicked woman had set her heart on what no gold could purchase, and no gems procure. It was no less than the Baptist's head.

V. REFLECTIONS ON ALL THIS. 1. Surely the maiden, bold as she was, must have been shocked at the proposal; surely she must have recoiled from such a cruelty; surely she must have required strong and powerful urgency to bring herself to present such a bloody petition. And this we think is implied in the word *προβιβασθεῖσα*, employed by St. Matthew, and signifying "made to go forward," and so instigated. She soon, however, recovered her sprightliness. Once her scruples were overcome, she returned in haste, and with eagerness preferred the ghastly request for John the Baptist's head to be given her immediately—lest time might cool the royal ardour—and in a charger, one of the platters used in the feast, and thus one of those just at hand, to make sure of the execution on the spot. The terms are expressive of the utmost eagerness and haste: "Give me here—immediately in a charger," is the demand after she had "come in straightway with haste." 2. The king at once repented, but too

late; he was excessively sorry (*πρὸς λύπην*). This word is only used twice again in the New Testament—of the Saviour in his agony, and of the rich ruler in parting, perhaps for ever, from the Saviour. But then there was the false shame consequent on repeated oaths, and because of the presence of so many persons of quality. How could he break the former? How could he insult, by withdrawal of his kingly promise or breach of faith, the latter? How could he set aside (*ἀπερῆσαι*) a promise made before so many, and confirmed by so many oaths? 3. At once a guardsman (*σπεκουλάτης*, either equal to *δορυφόρος*, a satellite or body-guard, or equal to *κατάσκοπος*, a spy, or scout; at all events, a guardsman of Herod now at war with Aretas) is despatched. The head is brought, dripping with blood. Oh, horrid sight! It is handed on a platter to the maiden; and she, maiden though she was, received it, and, maiden though she was, bore it away to her mother. The word “maiden” (*κορδαῖον*, equivalent to little or young maiden) is repeated, as if to stigmatize the untender, unfeeling, and beyond expression unmaidenly, conduct of this princess. 4. So ended the last act of this bloody tragedy. It now remained for the sorrowing disciples of the Baptist tearfully and tenderly to take up the corpse (*πτῶμα*, equivalent to *cadaver*) of their beloved master, and consign it to its last resting-place in the tomb.

VI. ADDITIONAL REMARKS. 1. A nearly parallel case, or a crime somewhat similar to that of Herod, is referred to in strongest terms of condemnation by Cicero, in the twelfth chapter of his ‘Treatise on Old Age,’ as follows:—“I indeed acted unwillingly in banishing from the senate L. Flaminius, brother of that eminently brave man, T. Flaminius, seven years after he had been consul; but I thought that his licentiousness should be stigmatized. For when he was consul in Gaul, he was prevailed on by a courtesan, at an entertainment, to behead one of those who were in confinement on a capital accusation; . . . but lewdness so abandoned and so desperate, which was combining with private infamy the disgrace of the empire, could by no means be visited with approbation by myself and Flaccus.” 2. It was in a gloomy dungeon, in the strong old castle of Machærus, that the Baptist was imprisoned and beheaded. That place was in Peræa, nine miles east of the Dead Sea, and on the borders between the dominion of Herod and of Aretas. It is thus described by Josephus in relation to its strength: “The nature of the place was very capable of affording the surest hopes of safety to those that possessed this citadel, as well as delay and fear to those that should attack it; for what was walled in was itself a very rocky hill, elevated to a very great height; which circumstance alone made it very hard to be subdued. It was also so contrived by nature that it could not be easily ascended; for it is, as it were, ditched about with such valleys on all sides, and to such a depth that the eye cannot reach their bottoms, and such as are not easily passed over, and even such as it is impossible to fill up with earth.”—J. J. G.

Vers. 30—44. Parallel passages: Matt. xiv. 13—21; Luke ix. 10—17; John vi. 1—14.—*Miraculous provision.* 1. THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND. 1. *The vivid description of St. Mark.* In connection with this miracle, St. Mark describes the recognition of our Lord by the multitude, their running together on foot, their outspeeding the Saviour, their arrival at the place of disembarkation before him, the compassion that moved him, the instruction he gave them. He describes, moreover, the green grass on which the multitudes sat down, their divisions into hundreds and fifties, their reclining company after company (literally, a convivial party, and *συμπόσια συμπόσια*, a Hebraism, like *δύο δύο* of ver. 7) or as though in military order, the resemblance of the multitudes thus seated to the plots of a garden (*πρασια πρασια*, equivalent to “beds of leeks,” from *πράσον*, a leek, and the structure another Hebraism)—the whole exhibiting a stirring and life-like scene. The importance of this miracle may be inferred from all four evangelists recording it. 2. *The time of year.* From the fresh greenness of the grass we infer the season of the year, and can better account for the great multitudes that crowded the grassy space near Bethsaida. It was spring—March or April—and so the season of the Passover, as we are expressly informed by St. John; the pilgrim companies were on the move in that direction, and hence the greatness of the crowds that followed the Saviour. Another miracle of feeding the multitudes is recorded by St. Matthew, in the fifteenth chapter of that Gospel towards its close, and also by St. Mark, (viii 1—9). That the two miracles are quite distinct, is shown by the

following circumstances :—(1) In the miracle of feeding the four thousand just referred to, our Lord himself introduces the matter of supply. (2) The provision for the smaller number of four thousand was greater, being *seven* loaves and a few small fishes ; while here for the five thousand there are only *five* loaves and two fishes. (3) The baskets in this first miracle are called by the four evangelists *κοφίνοι*, small wicker-baskets ; on the second occasion they are called both by St. Matthew and St. Mark *στυπιδες*, rope-baskets, so large that in one of them Paul was let down the wall of Damascus ; and from *στέλα*, as if woven work, or rather from *σπυρίς*, wheat, as if a vessel for wheat. Our Lord also, when making reference to the two miracles, makes the same distinction ; thus, "When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets (*κοφίνους*) full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among the four thousand, how many baskets (*στυπιδων*) full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven."

II. SOME SALIENT POINTS OF THE MIRACLE, AND THE LESSONS TAUGHT. 1. *The way of duty the way of safety.* The first lesson here taught us is that the way of duty is the way of safety. We see on the surface of the narrative the satisfaction of the multitudes on recognizing our Lord, their eager haste in coming up with him, their earnest desire for his teaching, their prolonged attention to his utterances. Long without a right guide, long wanting a true leader, long panting for the green pastures and still waters, long athirst for "the sincere milk of the Word" they have found at last the Good Shepherd ; they know his voice, and follow him. They had much to learn, and our Lord taught truths he taught them, they had almost forgotten the claims of the body till the cravings of nature forced themselves upon them ; at all events, they had laid aside their usual forethought for the supply of those wants. And now the day is far spent, the shades of evening are closing round them ; they find themselves in a place distant from any human habitation, and destitute of the articles of human food. How are they to meet the emergency? Whence are they to obtain the refreshment they so much need? How were they to get "two hundred pennyworth of bread," which, if we reckon the denarius at eightpence halfpenny, would cost upwards of £7? No doubt they thought of different expedients. The disciples proposed one course, our Lord pursued another. The Lord is a rich provider ; he never falsifies the promise, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Here, then, we are bidden to "stand still, and see the salvation of God." The result is recorded in the words, "They did all eat, and were filled." 2. *The compassion of the Saviour.* His compassionate heart embraces all his people's wants, and those wants at all times. In the exercise of that compassion he remembers the body as well as the soul. He remembered it in creation ; he remembered it in redemption : "We wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." He remembers it in his providential care over it, and provision for it from day to day. With his own lips he taught this cheering lesson when on earth, "Your heavenly Father knoweth ye have need of all these things." And he that gave us so much unasked, will not refuse us what we need when he is asked. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" 3. *Nature of this miracle by which he supplied their wants.* Our Lord on this occasion exhibited his compassion in supplying the people's wants by an act of creative power. Some of his miracles are restorative, as when he restores sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, motion to the lame, hearing to the deaf, and power to the palsied limb. Some are redemptive, as when he rescues the poor demoniac from the foul fiends that had usurped such power over him. Some are punitive, as when he blasted the barren tree, as a symbolic lesson to all cumberers of the ground, and swept away the ill-got gains of the swinish Gadarenes. One is transformative, as when he turned the water in the waterpots of Cana into wine. The miracle before us is an act of creative power ; for in what other light can we regard the multiplication of five loaves and two fishes into a supply of food sufficient for such a multitude, so that "they did all eat, and were filled"? He lays all nature under contribution to supply his people's wants. Even an act of creation will not be withholden, if their necessities require it. 4. *The Saviour's love of order.* "Order," says the poet, "is Heaven's first law ;" "Let everything be done decently, and in order," is the apostle's command. Our Lord confirms both by his example, in the orderly arrangement and disposition into

rank and file, as it were, which he here directs. Whether we are in the Church or in the world—that is, whether we are engaged in the arrangements of the one or in the affairs of the other—we shall do well to observe this law of order. “A place for everything,” says the old maxim, “and everything in its proper place; a time for everything, and everything at its right time.” Such orderly regulation of all our matters would save time; it would save trouble; it would facilitate work; it would further largely the success of our pursuits and plans. Here all saw the miracle, all were fed, all were satisfied; no one was neglected, no one passed over or passed by. 5. *His devotion.* Never did our Lord lose sight of the glory of God. This was the object ever prominently kept in view. Before he brake he looked up to heaven and blessed, and brake at once (*κατέκλασε*, aorist) the loaves, and was giving (*ἐδίδου*, imperfect) bit by bit, as it were, to the disciples for distribution by them among the multitude. As Creator, he multiplied the loaves; as creature, he looked up for Heaven’s blessing on them. From every gift we are to look up to the Giver; in every gift we are to recognize the Author; for every gift we are to record our grateful acknowledgments; in every bounty we are to own the grace and goodness and greatness of the heavenly Benefactor. To see God in all his works, to trace him in all his ways, to obey him in all his will, to adore him in all the outgoings of his loving-kindness towards us, and to see him in every blessing he bestows, is the lesson taught us by the example of Christ in this passage, and by the exhortation of his apostle in that other passage, “Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” 6. *The duty of frugality.* Mighty and magnificent as the works of nature are, there is no needless expenditure of force. Many of the great agencies employed serve a variety of ends. Many results often proceed from one single cause. So in the domain of miracle. He never resorts to miracle when ordinary means will suffice. Amid all that vast abundance which our Lord created on this occasion, he suffers nothing to go to loss. Here we see the same attention to the great things and the little things. He allows nothing to go to waste. “Gather up the fragments,” he said. Surely this teaches us economy, surely this enjoins thrift, surely this enforces the old proverb, “Waste not, want not.” Surely this is condemnatory of all extravagance in every department, whether of food, or raiment, or place of abode, or manner of life, or course of conduct.

III. DAILY BREAD AND ITS PROVISION. 1. *The wonderful is not necessarily miraculous.* Some hold that the daily bread which God gives us, which we eat, and by which we are sustained, is a miracle as great, or greater, because a standing miracle, than the feeding of five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, or the feeding of four thousand with seven loaves and a few small fishes. They refer to the fact that the seed covered in the earth dies and lives again, growing up under the rains of the spring and the suns of the summer, and in due season ripening into the golden grain of the harvest, then made into bread, and becoming wholesome food; and allege that in all this we have a miracle great as the multiplying by our Lord of the loaves and the fishes; that omnipotence is as much required in the one case as in the other; but that what is rare we call miraculous, while what is common and usual we call a law or process of nature; though both alike are manifestations of the mighty power of God. This reasoning appears plausible, and has an element of truth in it, but it mistakes the real nature of miracle. It is, in fact, pretty much the view of Augustine, who, besides confounding the wonderful with the miraculous, regards miracle as simply an acceleration of a natural process; for he says of the miracle at Cana that “he made wine in a wedding feast, who makes it every year in the vines; but the former we do not wonder at, because it occurs every year: by its constant recurrence it has lost, or ceased to command, admiration.” The chief element of miracle is hereby overlooked. We admit that nature is an effect whose cause is God, and that omnipotence is at work in the processes of nature as well as in the really miraculous result; yet not in the same way. That which differentiates the one from the other is, that God in the one case produces the result by immediate efficiency, in the other by means of secondary or subordinate causes; in the one by a direct act of volition, in the other by the processes of nature. To attribute a miracle to the operation of a higher but unknown law is a gratuitous assumption, and is as unnecessary as it is unsatisfactory. To regard it as the result of an accelerated law of nature, is overlooking the fact that the really miraculous element in such a case is this very quickening into rapid result, or hastening in a forcible and extraordinary

manner the ordinary process. It has been said, somewhat rhetorically, "We breathe miracles, we live by miracles, we are upheld every day miraculously, and that individual has a blind mind or a hard heart (or both) who does not see, or seeing does not recognize, the hand of our heavenly Father in all those gifts of his providence and bestowments of his bounty, by which we are sustained and surrounded." Now, to convert the rhetorical into the real, we must substitute for "miracles," each time the word occurs in the cited paragraph, "marvels" or "wonders," that is, processes that are wonderful—indeed, quite marvellous, but in no strict sense miraculous; and then, with this alteration, the devoutness of the sentiments expressed commends itself to our admiration. 2. *Daily bread, though not a miracle, is God's gift.* It may be objected, that our daily bread is not so much God's gift as the fruit of man's labour. Who then, O man, we may well ask, has given you the hand to labour, the strength to use it, the health to employ it? Who, moreover, has given you the fruitful field to till, the former and the latter rain to refresh and ripen the growing grain? Or, going further back, who has imparted to the seed, sown or planted, the power of growth or development? Still further, who counteracts the hurtful effects of too much drought, or neutralizes the baneful consequences of excessive moisture, or tempers the scorching heat, or checks the pinching cold? Who protects the root from the worm that would injure it, or saves the ear from the blight that would taint it? Who prevents the mildew that would damage the maturing grain, or the disease that would quite destroy it? Or who rebukes the curse of barrenness that would render all efforts useless? Who watches over the various stages of the crop—first the blade, then the ear, afterwards the ripe corn in the ear, till, having weathered all the storms that endangered it, and escaped all the perils to which it was exposed, the golden grain is safely gathered at length into the garner? Who has thus blessed the labour of your hands, establishing your handiworks each one? Who but God? Who, then, is the Giver of your daily bread? Who but God? Thus Moses said to Israel: "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God. . . . Beware . . . lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, . . . and thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth." Who has not admired and fallen in with the sentiments of the beautiful hymn?—

"O God of Bethel, by whose hand

Thy people still are fed;

Who through this weary pilgrimage

Hast all our fathers led;

"Our vows, our prayers, we now present

Before thy throne of grace;

God of our fathers, be the God

Of their succeeding race."

IV. SPIRITUAL FOOD: ITS NATURE AND NECESSITY. 1. *The necessity of spiritual food.* From this miracle of feeding the multitude with bodily food, our Lord, as was his wont, took occasion, as we learn from the parallel passage of St. John, to call attention to spiritual food. From the bread wherewith he had fed their bodies, he passed naturally to that which is equally necessary and equally indispensable to support and sustain the soul. He showed them that, as bread is the staff of life for the body, there is something equally essential to the life of the soul. It matters not by what name we call it—whether manna, or bread, or flesh—the thing remains the same. 2. *The nature of this spiritual food.* He proposes himself to them for the purpose specified, telling them plainly and positively that he himself was that spiritual nutriment. "I," he says, "am the Bread of life." Nor does he stop with this; he proceeds to explain in some sort, or at least to extend, the sentiment to which he had given utterance, by the additional statement, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." By this, as it appears to us, he hinted at his coming in the flesh and shedding his blood upon the cross; for how else could his blood be separated from his flesh but by being shed?

He thus intimated, under the thin veil of an almost transparent figure, his incarnation and atonement—his life as an example, and his death as an expiation, in other words, the benefits procured by his manifestation in the flesh, and the blessings purchased by his sacrificial blood-shedding on the cross. 3. *This food partaken of by faith.* He enforces all this by urging their acceptance of these benefits and blessings. They have been secured, but, in order to be fully enjoyed, they must be partaken of; and they cannot be partaken of without faith—they cannot be made our own without faith; in a word, great as they are and precious as they are, they can in no way benefit or profit us without the exercise of faith. Accordingly, he sets forth faith under the suitable symbol of eating and drinking, and graciously invites to its exercise. He encourages them to the performance of this duty by several considerations of the most cheering kind. He holds forth to them the prospect of a living and lively union that would thence ensue, and ever after exist, between him and them; he promises them nourishment, life, and comfort as the consequences of that union; and he comforts them with the assurance of fellowship and friendship in time, and unspeakable felicity through all eternity; for he says, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him;" again he says, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed;" while he further adds, to crown all, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." 4. *Want of food, natural and spiritual: its effects.* There is no difficulty in forming a correct idea of the condition of body that would result from want of daily bread. It would stunt an individual's growth, make him a starveling in appearance, and leave him without strength for work of any kind. Similar, but still worse, is the condition of soul resulting from the want of spiritual bread. Without Jesus, who is the living Bread that came down from heaven, there is neither life nor growth, neither grace nor strength, nor spiritual power of any description in the soul. On the other hand, by union with Christ we live. So it was with the apostle: "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." By virtue of that union we are strengthened. So with the same apostle: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." By means of this union we receive spiritual food daily, and thus "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." By this heavenly food we are qualified for spiritual work and warfare. Hence our Lord's direction, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." Hence the blessing pronounced on those "who hunger and thirst after righteousness;" hence, too, we can cordially join in the well-known words—

"Good is the Lord! He gives us bread;
He gives his people more;
By him their souls with grace are fed,
A rich, a boundless store."

Three practical duties we learn from the whole: (1) cordiality in accepting the provisions of the gospel by living faith on our living and loving Lord; (2) contentment with our lot, and thankfulness for daily bread, as also for the spiritual food of the soul; and (3) entire consecration to that God in whom "we live, and move, and have our being," "who satisfieth our mouth with good things," and "filleteth our soul as with marrow and fatness."—J. J. G.

Vers. 45—56. Parallel passages: Matt. xiv. 22—36; John vi. 15—21.—*Miraculous protection.* I. WALKING ON THE WATER. 1. *Almighty power.* Every one who has glanced over the early pages of English history is familiar with the story of Canute the Dane. That king wished to reprove the fulsome flattery of his courtiers when they spoke of his power as unlimited. He ordered his chair to be set by the sea-side as the tide was coming in. He peremptorily commanded the waves to withdraw, and waited a while as if for their compliance. He seemed to expect prompt obedience, and watched to see them retire; but onward, onward came the surging sea; its waves kept steadily advancing, till the monarch fled before it, and left his chair to be washed away in its waters. He then turned to his courtiers, and solemnly reminded them that that Sovereign alone was absolute whom the winds and waves obeyed—who controlled the former, and set bounds to the latter, saying, "Hicerto

shall ye come, but no further." The sacred writers claim it as the peculiar prerogative of God to gather the wind in his fists and bind the waters in a garment. Job, in celebrating the attributes of the Almighty, applies to him the sublime and striking sentence, "Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea." 2. *Comparison of two similar miracles.* There are two miracles of our Lord which have a close resemblance to each other, and at the same time considerable dissimilarity. One of these is that recorded in this passage, and called his "walking on the waters;" the other is distinguished by the name of his "stilling the storm" (ch. iv. 35—41). By comparing these together, we find that the circumstances of the disciples were much worse, and their distress much greater, at the time referred to in this passage than on the former occasion. We may glance (1) at the stilling of the storm, which we purposely passed over at its proper place in the fourth chapter. Combining the words of the three evangelists who describe that former miracle, we cannot fail to be struck with the exceedingly graphic nature of that description, and that in so few words. We are, in fact, made to see it as though the whole were transpiring before our eyes, so truly pictorial is the recital. There is first the sudden squall (λαλαβ, St. Mark and St. Luke), its severity (μεγάλη, St. Mark), its rapid descent upon the lake (κατέβη, St. Luke), the agitation that ensued (σεισμός, St. Matthew), the waves as they kept sweeping over the deck of the small craft (πέβαλλεν, imperfect, St. Mark), their beginning to fill with water (συνεπληροῦντο, St. Luke, and γεμίζεσθαι, St. Mark, but καλύπτεσθαι, St. Matthew), the peril in which the passengers found themselves (ἐκινδύνουν, St. Luke); while Jesus remained all the time fast asleep in the hinder part of the ship on a pillow (προσκεφάλαιον, St. Mark). Then follow the alarm of the disciples, the twice-repeated appeal of "Master, master" (ἐπιστάτα, ἐπιστάτα, St. Luke) evidencing their trepidation and terror, their eager cry for instant help (σῶσον, aorist imperative, St. Matthew) in their present perishing condition (ἀπολλύμεθα, SS. Mark, Matthew, and Luke), the quiet dignity and self-possession of the Saviour, his rebuke to the spirit of the storm (σιῶπα, περίμωσο, only recorded by St. Mark); or perhaps we may regard the former word as a command to the sea and the latter to the wind, as if he commanded the roar of the water to be silent, and the howling of the wind to be still, the spirit thereof being muzzled, as the word literally imports; while the imperative of the perfect implies that the work was instantaneous—completed soon as the word was uttered. Then we have the storm falling as suddenly as it rose—at once spending its force, wearing itself out and ceasing from very weariness (ἐκόπασεν, St. Mark). The calm that ensued was as great in proportion as had been the storm, with the milky whiteness of the foam that now alone remained from the storm, on the tranquil waters (γαλήνη), if we derive the word from γάλα, milk; or with the "smile that dimpled" the face of the deep, if we derive the word from γελῶν. All these incidents are not so much narrated as exhibited. It may be added, as an interesting circumstance in the respective descriptions of the evangelists St. Mark and St. Matthew, that while the former, in his usual graphic and pictorial style of description, represents the waves as pitching or beating, or actually throwing themselves on the vessel so that it was filling (γεμίζεσθαι), the latter describes the boat as covered (καλύπτεσθαι) with the waves. Hence it has been inferred, with good reason, that St. Matthew's point of view was plainly from one of the other vessels that, we are told, accompanied, and from which he saw the waves hiding out of sight, the boat in which the Saviour was; while St. Mark, or rather St. Peter, from whose lips he had the description, was evidently in the same boat with our Lord, and from inside the vessel observed the waves rushing up against her sides, and filling her. Besides, the word περίμωσο reminds us of the use of φιοῦν, to put to silence, literally muzzle, used by St. Peter in 1 Epist. ii. 15. But (2) though the storm may have been equally great in the case of the miracle just described as in that of the passage before us, yet there were several modifying circumstances in the former that are not found in this latter case. On that occasion we read that "there were also with him other little ships;" at the time specified in this passage the ship in which the disciples sailed was alone. On the former occasion the Saviour was with them and in the boat; on this he was both absent and distant. On the former occasion they had the advantages, no inconsiderable ones, of day and light about them; on this they were surrounded by the darkness and dead of night. On the former occasion they were not, it would seem, far

from land—they had just launched forth (*ἀνέχθησαν*), as St. Luke informs us; on this they were in the midst of the sea (*μέσον*). On the former occasion the storm had come down on the lake, and, for aught we know, was bearing them rapidly forward towards their destination; on this, we are expressly told, it was against them—"the wind was contrary (*ἐναντίος*) unto them." These points of comparison prove the extreme peril in which the disciples were at this time. Great as had been their danger before, it is greater now. 3. *Cause of these dangerous storms.* Such sudden dangerous storms are still of frequent occurrence on that small inland lake. The best comment on all this physical commotion, and the best explanation of the nature and cause as well as scene of this miracle, may be found in Thomson's 'The Land and the Book.' There, after his notice of a storm which he had witnessed on the lake, we find the following account:—"To understand the causes of these sudden and violent tempests, we must remember the lake lies low—six hundred feet lower than the ocean; that the vast naked plateaus of Jaulan rise to a great height, spreading backward to the wilds of the Hauran and upward to snowy Hermon; that the water-courses have cut out profound ravines and wild gorges, converging to the head of this lake, and that these act like gigantic funnels to draw down the cold winds from the mountains. On the occasion referred to we suddenly pitched our tents at the shore, and remained for three days and nights exposed to this tremendous wind." 4. *The difficulty of the disciples.* Their difficulty was equal to their danger. They were *toiling* (*βασανίζόμενοι*, literally, *tortured, baffled*, tested as metals by the touchstone) in rowing, and we cannot but commend them for their conduct. They were using the proper means, and that is ever right to do; but the means did not avail. They were employing every energy; but it was to no purpose. They were putting forth all their strength; but it was utterly fruitless, and without result. The wind was still against them. Whether it was blowing a gale, as it does when it travels at the rate of sixteen miles an hour, or whether it was blowing a high gale, when it goes with the rapidity of thirty-six miles an hour, or whether it was blowing a storm, which it does when it sweeps with the speed of sixty miles an hour, or proceeding with hurricane fury at ninety miles an hour,—whatever may have been the velocity of that wild wind, it was rude and boisterous; and, what made matters worse, it was directly opposite—right ahead. There they were struggling, toiling, tugging; but all in vain. There they were working with all their might; but still their frail barque was the plaything of wind and water—tossed by the waves and the sport of the storm. They themselves were every moment expecting to find a watery grave in that tempestuous sea. 5. *Another source of distress.* There was another source of distress, and one which aggravated their difficulty and added to their danger. That was the continued absence of the Master. When he had sent them away—in fact, "constrained" (*ἠνάγκασε*) them, as though reluctant to go without him—he remained alone on the land. But why leave them at all? Or why leave them so long? Or why especially leave them at such a critical juncture? Or why, at least, delay his coming in their great emergency? They would naturally think of the storm that once before had befallen them on that self-same sea. They would think of the glorious Personage that then sailed with them in the self-same boat. They would think of the sound slumber he enjoyed, as he lay on the cushion in the stern. They would think of his calm composure when he awoke. They would think of the short but stern command he uttered, when he rebuked so effectually the tempest, and hushed it into a calm. They would think of that gracious presence that curbed the winds and calmed the waves and checked even the swell of the waters. They would think, "Were he with us now, he would still the storm, and we should soon be safe on shore." They would think of the petition they presented to him, the prayer they prayed, the fervency of spirit that inspired it, the faith that dictated it, the frailty that cleaved to it when they said, "Lord, save us!"—there was faith; "we perish!"—there their faith was weak. Ever and anon, as they regarded the war of elements that raged around, they would sigh for their absent Lord, and long for land. No wonder, for had Christ been in the boat all would have been well. 6. *The Saviour's presence is safety.* Nearly half a century before Christ, a great conqueror attempted to cross the stormy Sea of Adria in a small boat. The waves rolled mountains high. The courage of the sailors failed them. They refused to venture further. It was a sea in which no boat could live. Soon, however, they were reanimated and encouraged to renew their toil, when the conqueror

discovered himself, and told them who and what he was, in the characteristic words, "You carry Caesar and his fortunes." With Christ in the boat, the disciples might have flung their fears to the winds, for One infinitely greater than Caesar would have been there—One who could have stirred their hearts and raised their courage with the emboldening words, "You carry Christ and his Church."

II. THE EYE OF CHRIST IS ON THE BOAT THAT CARRIES HIS DISCIPLES. 1. *His omniscience.* He saw it all—their difficulty and danger and distress. His eyes were upturned to heaven in prayer, yet he saw all that was transpiring. The night was pitchy dark, yet he saw that small speck tossed like a cork upon the waters of that stormy sea. He had constrained them to embark, but he kept his eye upon them. He saw their fears, but he meant to teach them a new lesson of faith and confidence. He saw them from the distant mountain to which he had retired apart to pray. It is positively stated that he saw them. He saw them, though he was on the mountain-side and they were on the sea; he saw them from a distance which the ken of no mortal eye could reach; he saw them through the darkness of the night; he saw them in their panic terror; he saw them and all their embarrassments; he saw them when they did not, and when they could not, see him. "Be of good cheer!" he said. I did not forget you; I did not forsake you; I had you on my heart; I had you in my eye all the time. I did not fail to look on you, though you failed to look to me; I did not shut up my compassions, though you restrained prayer. You were neither out of sight nor out of mind. I was resolved you should not perish, nor a hair of your head fall. Boisterous as the wind was, I had charged it not to presume to harm you; rough as the sea was, I had commanded it not to dare to destroy your frail craft or damage one of the crew. Absence does not limit my power; distance does not separate you from my presence; danger and difficulty and distress only make you dearer, and call forth my more tender care. 2. *His love is unchanging.* Jesus is the same Saviour still, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." "Be of good cheer!" he said. These words, though addressed to the first disciples, have sent their echo down along the centuries, and bring comfort to disciples still. In them Christ addresses you, reader, and myself. By them he says to every faithful follower, "Mine eye is on thee; it has been on thee hitherto; it will be on thee to the end. You may rest assured I will never fail thee—no, never forsake thee." Again, the words of the Saviour, "Be of good cheer!" are backed by another fact which presents itself to us in this passage, and that fact is the purpose for which our Lord had retired to the lone mountain-side. He was passing the night in *prayer*, not specially for himself but for his disciples—his disciples then and now; yes, for his disciples in that slight ship and on that stormy sea. They toiled and rowed; he prayed. They were suffering; he was supplicating. They were struggling; he was interceding. They were buffeting the waters; he was bearing them, as High Priest, on his heart before God in the holy of holies of that mountain solitude. They were ready to faint; he was praying for them that they might not faint, and that their faith might not fail. They were longing for the Master; he was exercising his love on their behalf. 3. *A true picture of the Christian's life.* It is so still—as it was it is, and ever shall be, on the part of our dear Redeemer and his redeemed ones. We have before us a true picture of life—of human life, of the Christian's life. We are toiling in this world below; the Saviour is employed on our behalf in the world above. We are in circumstances of peril and pain; the Saviour bids us "be of good cheer!" and look up to him; "he has overcome the world." We are afloat on the sea of life; our barque is fragile, the wind is high, the storm scary, the sea raging, and we are tossed upon its waters; but Jesus is over all, and looks down on all, and will save through all, for "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." 4. *The suitable season for succour.* Once more he says, with yet another meaning, "Be of good cheer!" I did not come, it is true, when the storm began, nor when the first night-watch set in. I knew you would have wished me then, that you would have been glad to see me coming then, that you would have hailed my arrival then. But you knew little of the difficulties that beset you then, little of your own inability to cope with them then, little of the impotence of your own efforts then. You knew not, at least not sufficiently then, that the power of man is weakness, and the wisdom of man is folly. You knew comparatively little of your need of a higher hand and a stronger arm to save you then, and little also of the great mercy of deliverance. For the like reason I came not

in the second watch, nor even in the third. The fourth watch had commenced, and still I saw reason to delay my coming. It was half run and more before the proper moment arrived. I did not postpone nor defer an instant longer than was meet. Soon as the minute-hand pointed to the right moment on the dial-plate of time, I came, and came at once, without further or any unnecessary delay. 5. *God's time is the right time.* God's time is not only the right time, but the best time. By his coming the time he did, the Saviour said in effect to the disciples, and through them to us, when we, like them, are tossed by the down-rushing winds and the upheaving waves of a troublesome world, Had I come sooner, it would have been premature on my part, and not expedient for you. Had I come sooner, it would have been pleasanter, but not so profitable for you. Had I come sooner, I should have consulted your feelings more than your interests. This fourth watch, and this last part of it in particular, is the season of your extremity and the time of my opportunity. Thus it is still. When you, reader, were saying, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Is his mercy clean gone for evermore?" his grace and mercy were drawing very near. When you were ready to give up all for lost, and about sinking into despair, then the Saviour said, I have come to give you confidence, to impart to you consolation, and inspire you with hope; in a word, to impress on your heart these words of comfort that now fall upon your ears. I come, therefore, as is my custom, at the moment best for the Creator's glory and the creature's good. Further, by the words, "Be of good cheer!" he reminds us of the fact that we never enjoy rest so much as after long hours of labour, we never enjoy safety so much as after a time of danger, we never enjoy sleep so much as after a day of toil, and we never enjoy a calm so much as after a time of storm. Some of us can attest this by personal experience. We have often been to sea, but only once in a storm. And never did we so thoroughly enjoy the land, or rest so sweetly on the shore, as after that terrible storm. 6. *Application to ourselves.* Thus will it be with all the dear children of God. After the tempests of earth, we shall enjoy the tranquillity of heaven all the more. After weary wanderings and a sorrowful sojourn in this vale of tears below, we shall relish far more keenly the rest and home above. Not only so, there is no common measure by which we can gauge the true relative proportions of these storms of earth and that sunshine of the skies. The great apostle of the Gentiles felt this when he said, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

III. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF OUR LORD'S PRESENCE. 1. *A mistake.* The announcement of the Saviour's presence is contained in the words, "It is I." When he did come the disciples mistook him. First they see through the gloom of night the dark object at some distance, then they discern the outline of a human figure standing out amid the darkness of the night and against the lowering sky. They never for one moment supposed it was the Saviour. "What can that phantom form be?" they thought within themselves. They had doubtless many conjectures, but sin gave its gloomy interpretation to the scene. It is a phantom—a spirit! they said; a spirit of evil, a spirit of woe, to take vengeance on the guilty! So it was with Herod; and so it was with Joseph's brethren, as we have seen; so it was with Belshazzar. So, too, with ourselves many a time. Not unfrequently we mistake our own best blessings; we think them distant when they are close at hand. Nay, we often mistake them altogether; we regard as a curse the very thing that God meant to prove a blessing. The dark cloud of his providence "we so much dread," even when it is "big with mercy," and ready to burst with "blessings on our head." We continue our mistake, until God becomes "his own Interpreter, and makes his meaning plain." It was thus with the disciples here, until Jesus revealed himself in a manner not to be mistaken, and said, "*It is I.*" Often and often in time of trouble, of trial, of toil, of difficulty or danger or distress, of adversity or affliction, we have said individually, "All these things are against me;" all these things are tokens of Divine displeasure; all these things are messengers of wrath. Jesus draws near and whispers to the soul, Not so; that trial, that cross, that bereavement, that sickness, that distress of whatever kind, came from me; it was my doing; it was I sent it; I was the Author of it; I sought by it your good; it is I, and you are to recognize me in it; it is I. "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." 2. *A calm succeeds the storm.* When all is storm around, when all is dark within, when of all human sources of consolation we

are constrained to say with the patriarch of Uz, "Miserable comforters are ye all;" just then, it may be, a happy thought occurs to us, a ray of heavenly light shines down upon us, a gleam of comfort comes to cheer us. We fear we are imposing on ourselves. Not so. Jesus comes in a way not to be misapprehended, and says to us, "It is I;" you need not be afraid. The winds have fallen and the waters subsided. It was I, says Jesus; they did it at my bidding. 3. *The real source of succour.* Relief comes. We are rescued from danger; from sickness we are restored to health; out of a situation of discomfort and unrest we are relieved. At such times we are apt to speak of the immediate instrumentalities in the case, and to attribute the change to second causes. This passage corrects that error. In it Jesus says, "It is I;" in other words, that medicine that proved so effectual derived its efficacy from me; it was I directed to it. Those friends that were so kind in the day of your trouble were moved to sympathy by me. It was I prompted them; it was I put it into their heart; it was I placed it in their power. "While some trust in horses, and some in chariots, we will make mention of the Name of the Lord." Thus, in all that betides the Christian, Jesus takes a part; in all the variety of change, and scene, and condition, and circumstance—that wonderful co-operation of all things for our good—we trace the presence of the Saviour. In the painful things and the pleasant, in the heights and depths, in the ups and downs, in the joys and sorrows, we are assured of the Saviour's power and presence: he is conducting us through all to the goodly land afar off.

"When the shore is won at last,
Who will count the billows past?"

4. *Jesus with us all the way.* (1) When the hour of our departure is at hand, when the last conflict approaches, when the darkness of death is beginning to envelop us, when we are passing through the dark valley of death-shade, the same Friend is at our side, the same friendly hand is on our shoulder, and the same fond voice sounds in our ears. It is the voice of Jesus, saying, "It is I;" death is my minister, my messenger; he can do you no harm; I have removed his sting. My rod and staff will comfort you; through me you will be more than conqueror, and will be able to challenge Death himself, and say, "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?" "This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto [rather, *over*] death." (2) Again, on the resurrection morning, when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth, the same voice will reverberate through the graves of the poor and the tombs of the rich with the words, "It is I;" "I am the resurrection and the life;" "My dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they come;" or, more literally and more correctly, "my dead body shall they come." There is not merely conjunction, not only union—all this is true, and all this is much; but more is meant, for the words "*together with*" are in italics, and so we are notified that they are not in the original. Thus there is identity; our Lord identifies himself with the dead in Christ. He is the Head, they are the members; and thus, one in life, one in death, they shall be one in the resurrection, and one through all eternity; therefore it is, "My dead body shall they come." (3) Also in the day of judgment, when "we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ," the same loving tones will cheer us. The Judge on the throne will stoop down and say to his people, "It is I." The same Saviour that shed his blood for you—in whom you believed, whom you obeyed, whom you followed, loved, and served—is now your Judge. It is I that said to you on earth, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is I, your Elder Brother, who say to you now in heaven, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world." 5. *Words of courage as well as comfort.* Words of courage are also spoken by him. He adds, "*Be not afraid.*" Be not afraid of temptation, for with every temptation he will prepare a way of escape. Be not afraid of trials; they enlarge your experience: "the trial of your faith worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." Be not afraid of tears; they will soon be wiped away: even now the tears you shed cleanse the eyes, so that you see spiritual things more clearly. Be not afraid of toils; they will soon be past, and then "there remaineth a rest for the people of God." Be not afraid of troubles, for "through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God." Be not afraid of the perplexities of the wilderness; he will "guide

you by his counsel" all the way. Be not afraid of the dark night of storm; for the dark clouds will scatter, and the feet of Omnipotence will come walking on the water. Be not afraid of the storms of persecution; "blessed are ye when all shall persecute you for the Saviour's sake." Only make sure you are his, and all the blessings of the covenant will be your portion. 6. *The feeling of danger a precursor of safety.* "He would have passed by them." Why was this? Just that they might fully feel their need of his help, and earnestly apply for it. Salvation is the response of heaven to man when, in his misery, he cries for it. We have read of a young prince who toiled much and travelled much, who was often in danger, many times in perplexity, frequently in difficulties. But he was never left alone; a faithful friend called Mentor was ever at his side—his counsellor, caretaker, guide, and guardian. How much greater is our privilege, to whom Jesus says, "It is I;" I will be with you all the way; I will be with you at every turn of the way; I will be with you in every time of need; I will be with you in every place of peril; I will be with you in the darkness of the night and amid the terrors of the storm! In calm majesty he will come, walking on the surface of the foam-crested wave; nor will he pass you by, but provoke your confidence, and prove your faith, and pour into your ears the inspiring words, "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid."

"Thus soon the lowering sky grew dark
O'er Bashan's rocky brow;

The storm rushed down upon the bark,
And waves dashed o'er the prow.

"The pale disciples trembling spake,
While yawned the watery grave,

'We perish, Master—Master, wake!
Carest thou not to save?'

"Calmly he rose with sovereign will,
And hushed the storm to rest.

'Ye waves,' he whispered, 'Peace! be still!'
They calmed like a pardoned breast."

J. J. G.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VII.

Vers. 1, 2.—These verses, according to the Greek construction, should run thus: And there are gathered together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which had come from Jerusalem, and had seen that some of his disciples ate their bread with defiled, that is, unwashed, hands. The word (*ἐμμέψαντο*) translated in the Authorized Version, "they found fault," does not appear in the best authorities. It seems to have been interpolated to help the construction. St. Mark explains the meaning of the word *κοινὰς* (literally, *common*), by the word (*ἀνίπτους*) "unwashed." The disciples, doubtless, washed their hands, but they abstained from the multiplied ceremonial washings of the Pharisees, which they had received by tradition and punctiliously observed. The scribes and Pharisees, who had come from Jerusalem, were doubtless sent as spies, to watch and to report in no friendly spirit the proceedings of the great Prophet of Nazareth.

Vers. 3.—Except they wash their hands off.

The Greek word here rendered "off" is *πυγμῇ*: literally, *with the fist*, i.e. with the closed hand, rubbing one against the other. This word has caused a vast amount of criticism; and the difficulty of explaining it seems to have led to the adoption of a conjectural reading (*πυκνῶς* or *πυκνῇ*) rendered "oft;" *crebra* in the Vulgate. But the Syriac Peshito Version renders the Greek word by a word which means "diligently," and it is interesting and helpful, as a matter of exegesis, to know that it also renders the Greek word (*ἐπιμελῶς*) in Luke xv. 8 by the same Syriac synonym, "diligently." The "clenched fist" implies vigour and resolution, and points to "diligence," and there are very high authorities in favour of this rendering, as, Epiphanius, Isaac Casaubon, and Cornelius à Lapide, to say nothing of our best modern expositors. It is also adopted in the Revised Version. Holding the tradition of the elders. The Pharisees pretended that this tradition had been orally delivered by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, and then transmitted orally down to their time. These

oral precepts were afterwards embodied in the Talmud.

Ver. 4.—And when they come from the market (*ἀπὸ ἀγορᾶς*); literally, *and from the market-place*; there is no verb in the principal manuscripts, although the Cambridge Codex has *ἔβαν ἔλθουσιν*, and the old Latin gives *redeuntes*. In the market-place there would be every kind of men and things, clean and unclean, by contact with which they feared that they might be polluted; and so they considered that they had need to cleanse themselves from this impurity by a more careful and complete ablution. Another Greek word is used here, namely, *βαπτίζονται*. In the former verse the word is *νίθονται*, a more partial and superficial kind of washing than that implied in *βαπτίζω*. It should, however, be added that two of the great uncials, Vatican and Sinaitic, have *ραντίζονται*, “sprinkle themselves,” instead of *βαπτίζονται*—an authority sufficient to justify the Revisers of 1881 in putting it into the margin. The washing of cups, and pots, and brassen vessels, and of tables. The words (*καὶ κλινῶν*) wrongly rendered, “and of tables”—because they could only mean “couches”—have not sufficient authority to be retained in the text. “Cups” (*ποτηρίων*) mean “drinking vessels.” The “pot” (*ἑστῆς*) is a Roman word, *sextarius*, a small liquid measure, the sixth part of a *congius*, corresponding nearly to the English gallon, so that *ἑστῆς* would be rather more than a pint measure. *Brassen vessels*. These would probably be copper vessels, such as are still used in Syria for cooking purposes. These are particularly mentioned. Earthenware vessels would be broken. Which they have received to hold (*ἃ παρέλαβον κρατεῖν*); literally, *which they received to hold*: observe the aorist.

Ver. 5.—The Law of Moses prohibited contact with many things deemed to be unclean; and if any one had touched them he was counted unclean, so that he might not approach the temple until he had cleansed himself by the washing prescribed in the Law; the design being that by means of these ceremonial and bodily washings the Jews might be awakened to the necessity of spiritual cleansing. Hence the Jews, and especially the Pharisees, who wished to be esteemed more righteous than others, placing their whole religion in these external ceremonies, frequently washed themselves before their meals, and even at their meals. At the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee we read that there were placed “six waterpots of stone (*λίθιναι ὕδριαι*)” for these purifying purposes; so that if any Jew had by accident come into contact with any unclean thing, and so had contracted any ceremonial impurity, he might remove

it. This, however, was only a custom, and not a thing of legal obligation until it was exalted into a law by the Pharisees. Now, this punctilious observance of traditions by the Pharisees and other Jews yielded little or no religious profit; for it occupied their time with external purifications, and so drew away their attention from the duty of far greater moment—the cleansing of the soul from sin. They made clean “the outside of the cup and platter,” but neglected the inward cleansing of the heart. Therefore our blessed Lord, who came to put an end to the old ceremonial law, and to these vain and frivolous traditions which now overlaid it, and who wished to direct all the care of his disciples to the making of the heart clean, cared not to enforce these external washings upon his disciples, although he did not say this in so many words to the Pharisees, lest he should provoke their envy and their malice. He therefore meets their question in another way.

Vers. 6, 7.—Our Lord quotes against them a prophecy of Isaiah (xxix. 13). This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men. The prophet here gives the cause of the blindness of the Jews, because they honoured God with their lips, while their heart was far from him; and their worship of him (for that is the meaning of “their fear”) was the commandment of men, which they had been taught; that is, they worshipped God, not according to that spiritual worship which he had commanded, but after the traditions of men and of their own scribes, partly futile, partly perverse, and contrary to God’s Law. So he says, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you. The word is *καλῶς*, “excellently—beautifully—did he prophesy concerning you (*τῶν ὑποκριτῶν*), the hypocrites.” Not that the prophet had the hypocrites of our Saviour’s time in his mind when he uttered these words, but that the Spirit of God which was within him enabled him to describe accurately the character of those who seven centuries afterwards would be doing the same things as their forefathers. And observe how they were punished. For as they gave a lip-service only to God, praising him with their mouth indeed, but giving their heart to vanity and the world; so God on his part would give them the words only—the shell, so to speak, the letter which killeth; but take away from them the kernel—the spirit and the life, so that they might not lay hold of it nor taste it.

Ver. 9.—Here the word *καλῶς* is repeated. Full well (*καλῶς*) do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your

tradition. It is as though our Lord said, "Your traditions are not instituted by God, or by his servants the prophets, but they are modern inventions, which you desire to defend, not out of love or reverence for them, but because you are the successors of those who invented them, and arrogate to yourselves the power of adding to them and making similar new traditions."

Ver. 10.—Our Lord now gives an example of one of these human traditions. Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother;—that is, obey and love them, and succour them, if they need it; for here "honour" means not only reverence and love, but support, as is clear from ver. 12—and, He that speaketh evil of father or mother, let him die the death; that is, let him "surely die," without any hope of pardon. Our Lord means this: "That if he who by words only speaks evil of his father or his mother is, by law, guilty of death, how much more is he guilty of death who wrongs them by deed, and deprives them of that support which he owes them by the law of nature; and not only so, but teaches others so from Moses' seat, as you scribes and Pharisees do when you say, 'It is Corban.'"

Vers. 11—13.—But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is Corban, that is to say, Given to God—these words, "that is to say, Given to God," are St. Mark's explanation of "corban"—ye no longer suffer him to do ought for his father or his mother; making void the word of God by your tradition, which ye have delivered. Now, this the scribes and Pharisees did for their own covetous ends. For most of them were priests, who received offerings made to God as his ministers, and then converted them to their own uses. In this they greatly erred; because the obligation of piety by which children are bound to support their parents when they need it, is a part of the law of nature, to which every vow, every oblation, ought to yield. Thns, if any one had devoted his goods to God, and his father or his mother became needy, those goods ought to be given to his parents and not to the temple. The word "corban" is a Hebrew word, meaning "that which is brought near," "a gift or offering to God." Hence, figuratively, the place where these offerings were deposited was called the "corbanas," or, "sacred treasury" (see Matt. xxvii. 6, κορβανῶν). Hence to say of anything, "It is Corban," was to say that it had a prior and more sacred destination. And when it was something that a parent might need, to say, "It is Corban," i.e. it is already appropriated to another purpose, was simply to refuse his request and to deny him assistance, and so to break one of the first of the

Divine commandments. Thus the son, by crying "Corban" to his needy parents, shut their mouths, by opposing to them a scruple of conscience, and suggesting to them a superstitious fear. It was as much as to say, "That which you ask of me is a sacred thing which I have devoted to God. Beware, therefore, lest you, by asking this of me, commit sacrilege by converting it to your own uses." Thus the parents would be silenced and alarmed, choosing rather to perish of hunger than to rob God. To such extremities did these covetous scribes and Pharisees drive their victims, compelling a son to abstain from any kind of offices for his father or his mother. St. Ambrose says, "God does not seek a gift wrung out of the necessities of parents." *Making void* (ἀκυροῦντες); literally, *depriving it of its authority, annulling*. In Gal. iii. 17 the same word is rendered "disannul." *By your traditions*; the traditions, that is, by which they taught children to say "Corban" to their parents. Observe the words, "*your tradition*" (τῇ παραδόσει ὑμῶν); your tradition, as opposed to those Divine traditions which God has sanctified, and his Church has handed down from the beginning. And many such like things ye do. This is added by St. Mark to fill up the outline, and to show that this was only a sample of the many ways in which the commandment of God was twisted, distorted, and annulled by these rabbinical traditions.

Vers. 14, 15.—In the Authorized Version the beginning of this verse runs thus: "And when he had called all the people unto him, he said." But according to the best authorities, the adverb πάλιν should be inserted, and the words will run as follows:—And he called to him the multitude again. It is probable that he had waved them from him while he held this discourse with the scribes from Jerusalem. But now he calls the people near to him again, that all might hear that which concerned all alike. It is probable, indeed, that this discussion with the scribes may have taken place in the house, into which he again returned after having made this authoritative declaration to the multitude. The words are given with more emphasis here than as recorded by St. Matthew. Every one was solemnly invited to hearken and understand, while he announced a principle of the highest importance. Our Lord did not intend to disparage the difference between clean and unclean meats as it had been laid down in the Levitical Law. His object rather was to clear that teaching from the obscurities in which it had been involved by the scribes and Pharisees, who laid stress only on external acts. His object was to show that all impurity springs from the heart; and that, unless the heart is cleansed,

all external washings are in vain. It is as though he said, "The scribes teach you that it is not lawful to eat with unwashen hands, because unwashen hands make the food unclean, and unclean food defiles the soul. But in this they err; because not that which enters from without into the mouth, but that which proceeds from within through the mouth, and so from the heart, if it be impure,—this defiles the man;" as he more fully explains at ver. 21.

Ver. 16.—This verse has some good authority, but not sufficient to be retained in the text. The Revisers of 1881 have placed it in the margin.

Ver. 17.—Our Lord, having proclaimed this great principle to the multitude in the presence of their teachers, the scribes and Pharisees, returned into the house (the true reading is here *eis οικον*, without the article). It means, of course, the house where he was lodging. And then his disciples asked of him the parable. St. Matthew (xv. 15) says that the question was put to him by St. Peter, speaking in the name of the other disciples—another instance of the reserve maintained in this Gospel with reference to this apostle.

Vers. 18, 19.—Our Lord had already, in his sermon on the mount, taught his disciples fully wherein purity or impurity of heart consists, and he might, therefore, with good reason, ask them how it was that they, even they who had been so favoured by being constantly with him, had forgotten or misunderstood him. Our Lord's illustration is physically accurate. The portion carried off is that which by its removal purifies what remains. The part which is available for nourishment is, in its passage through the system, converted into chyle, the matter from which the blood is formed. What is not available for nourishment passes away into the *ἀφεδρών*, or draught. Purging all meats. The most approved reading here is undoubtedly the masculine (*καθαρίζων*), and not the neuter (*καθαρίζον*). This change of reading compels a somewhat different construction. Accepting, therefore, the masculine as the true reading, the only possible rendering is that which makes this last clause a comment by the evangelist upon our Lord's previous words, in which he indicated to the reader that our Lord intended by this illustration to show that no food, of whatever kind, when received with thanksgiving, can make a man unclean. The clause must, therefore, be connected with the preceding words, by the introduction of the words, in italics, "*This he said, making all meats clean.*" The passage, thus rendered, becomes a very significant exposition of what has gone before. It is well worthy of notice that this explanation is to be found

in St. Chrysostom (Homily on St. Matthew xv.): "Ὁ δὲ Μάρκος φησὶν, ὅτι καθαρίζων τὰ βρώματα, ταῦτα ἔλεγεν: "But Mark affirms that he said these things, making the meats clean." It may be added that this explanation agrees finely with the words in Acts x. 15, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."

Vers. 20—23.—From within, out of the heart of men; that is, from the reason and the will, of which the heart is the symbol and the laboratory. For the heart ministers the vital force to the intellect to enable it to understand, and to the will to enable it to live, although the seat of the intellect is in the brain. St. Mark's enumeration of evil things is in a somewhat different order from that of St. Matthew; and he adds to St. Matthew's list (*ἀφροσύνη*), foolishness, showing how all evil terminates in the loss of all moral and intellectual illumination. All these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man. Dr. Morison, in his admirable commentary on St. Mark, well observes here that "these things have an inward origin, and are vomited forth from the crater of the heart or soul;" and further on he says, "In a little sphere of things, and as regards *acts*, though not as regards *substances* or *essences*, men may be spoken of as creators. Men, that is to say, are the efficient causes of their own choices. If they were not, they would not be really free. If it was not so, there would be no real responsibility." St. Matthew (xv. 20) adds here, "But to eat with unwashen hands defileth not the man." This is the end and scope of the parable, which is to show that unwashen hands and unclean meats defile not a man, but only an impure and depraved will. It seems almost needless to observe that our Lord does not condemn the washing of the hands before meals as a thing in itself in any way wrong. All nations approve of ablutions as tending to cleanliness and health.

"Dant famuli manibus lymphas, Cere-
remque canistris
Expediunt, tonsisque ferunt mantelia
villis."

(Virgil, *Æneid*, i. 701, 702.)

"It was thought sordid and mean to sit down to meals with unwashen hands. Whence not the clergy only, but the people, washed their hands before prayer." The moral of all is this, how carefully is the heart to be guarded, instructed, and adorned, seeing that it is the instrument and laboratory of all evil and all good, of all vice and all virtue! "Keep thy heart with all diligence," so that nothing may enter therein and nothing go out therefrom and you not be conscious of it, and your reason may not approve; "for out of it are the issues of life."

Ver. 24.—Our Lord now passes out of Galilee into a heathen country, Syro-phenicia, into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, that he might begin to impart his miracles and his doctrine, which the scribes and Pharisees had rejected, to the Gentiles. There is not sufficient authority for omitting "Sidon" from the text. Both these cities were renowned for their extensive commerce and for their wealth. It is probable that the true reading in ver. 31, which will be noticed presently, may have led to the omission by some authorities of "Sidon" here. But there is really no inconsistency in retaining the words "and Sidon" here; and accepting the reading "through Sidon" there. Tyre, which was the capital of Phenicia, lay to the south, bordering on Judæa; Sidon to the north; and multitudes flocked to Christ from these parts. He entered into a house, and would have no man know it; and he could not be hid. He would have no man know it, partly for the sake of quiet, and partly lest he should rouse the Jews more bitterly against him, and give them occasion to cavil that he was not the Messiah promised to the Jews, because, having left them, he had turned to the Gentiles. St. Mark (iii. 8) has already informed us that his fame had spread to those about Tyre and Sidon.

Vers. 25—27.—The construction of this verse is Hebraistic (see Acts xv. 17). Instead of ἀκούσασα γὰρ, the approved reading is ἀλλ' εὐθὺς ἀκούσασα: But straightway a woman, whose young daughter (θυγάτριον)—literally, *little daughter*; St. Mark is fond of diminutives—had an unclean spirit. All ages were liable to this incursion of unclean spirits. The woman seems to have come from a distance. She was a Greek—that is, a Gentile—a Syro-phenician by race, as distinguished from the Libyan Phenicians, of Carthage. She was a descendant from those seven nations of Canaan which had been driven out by God's command. They were called in their own language "Canaanites," And she besought him (ῥηότα); literally, *asked him*. St. Matthew (xv. 22) says that "she cried (ἐκράυαγεν), Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David." Aristotle says that "parents love their children more than their children love them; because love descends, and because parents desire that their children should survive them, that they may live on in their children, as it were, after death; that they become, so to speak, immortal through their children, and possess that eternity, which they cannot have in themselves, in their children and their children's children." St. Matthew (xv. 23) tells us that at first "he answered her not a word," and he does not record the remarkable saying, Let the children first be filled

which in St. Mark precedes the words, it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. Dogs abound in Palestine and the surrounding districts, but they are not cared for. They go about in packs, with no particular masters and no particular homes. They seem to be chiefly useful as scavengers. Nevertheless, the dog of the East is amenable to kindness shown him by man, and there, as in England, children and young dogs soon become friendly. It is of (κυνάρια) "*little dogs*" that our Lord here speaks. Our Lord here speaks after the manner of the Jews, who called the Gentiles dogs, as distinguished from themselves, the children of the kingdom. *Let the children first be filled.* Suffer me first to heal all the Jews who need my help. Our Lord makes at first as though he would refuse her request; and yet it is not an absolute denial. There might be hope for her when the children were filled. Thus Christ oftentimes deals with holy souls, namely, by humbling and mortifying them when they desire anything at his hands, in order that with yet greater importunity and humility they may seek and obtain it. St. Chrysostom says, "Whether we obtain that which we seek for, or whether we obtain it not, let us ever persevere in prayer. And let us give thanks, not only if we obtain, but even if we fail to obtain. For when God denies us anything, it is no less a favour than if he had granted it; for we know not as he does what is most expedient for us."

Ver. 28.—In this verse there is a slight change of reading, causing a change of rendering; namely, thus: Yea, Lord: even—καὶ instead of καὶ γὰρ—the dogs—τὰ κυνάρια, *the little dogs*—under the table eat of the children's crumbs. Observe the antithesis: "the children" (the little daughter) sitting at the table; the "*little dogs*" under the table. It is as though she said, "Give me, most gracious Lord, only a crumb (a small mercy compared with thy greater mercies), the healing of my little daughter, which may fall as it were *obiter* from thee upon us Canaanites and Gentiles, and be gratefully picked up as one of thy lesser benefits." Cornelius a Lapide enlarges beautifully upon this: "Feed me, then, as a little dog. To me, a poor Gentile, let a crumb of thy grace and mercy be vouchsafed; but let the full board, the plentiful bread of grace and righteousness, be reserved for the Jewish children. I cannot leave the table of my Lord, whose little dog I am. No; if you spurn me away with your foot, or with a blow, I will go away; but I will come back again, like a little dog, through another door. I will not be driven away by blows. I will not let thee go until thou hast given me what I ask of thee." For this Canaanite

constrains Christ, arguing her case from his own words, prudently, modestly, forcibly, and with a humble faith which perceives that he is not unwilling to be overcome by petition and by reason. Indeed, she entangles him in the meshes of his own words. So great is the plenteousness of his table, that it shall abundantly suffice for her if she may but partake of the crumbs which fall from the table of his children."

Ver. 29.—St. Matthew says here (xv. 28), "O woman, great is thy faith: be it done unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was healed from that hour." If we suppose St. Mark's words to come in after St. Matthew's words "be it done unto thee even as thou wilt," the two narratives are perfectly consistent. Our Lord could no longer restrain himself or resist these wonderful appeals of faith. Overcome by the skilful reasoning and importunity of the Canaanite, he gives her that which she asks, and more. He heals her daughter, and he sets a crown of gold upon her head. It is here obvious to remark that this child vexed by the unclean spirit represents the soul tempted by Satan and polluted by sin. In such a condition we must distrust our own strength, and rely only on Christ, and call upon him with humility and repentance; acknowledging ourselves to be but as dogs in his sight; that is, miserable sinners; yet not such as that we should despair of pardon, but rather that we should hope for the mercy of Christ the greater we feel our misery to be. For it is worthy of a great Saviour to cleanse and save great sinners. Again, this Gentile daughter represents the Church of the Gentiles, which, shut out from salvation by the justice of God, enters the kingdom of heaven through the door of mercy. Here was a great conversion indeed; for now the Jews through their unbelief change places with the Gentiles, and, like them, can only be admitted through the same gate of Divine mercy.

Ver. 30.—There is an inversion in the order of the clauses in this verse, according to the best authorities. The words should run thus: And she went away unto her house, and found the child (*τὸ παιδίον*) laid upon the bed, and the devil gone out. She found her little daughter set free from the possession, but exhausted by the convulsions which he caused in departing from her; weary with the violence of the struggle, but restful and composed. So the sinful soul, set free from sin by the absolution of Christ, rests upon the couch of a conscience pacified by the blood of Christ, and at peace with God.

Ver. 31.—According to the most approved authorities this verse should be read thus: And again he went out from the borders of

Tyre, and came through Sidon unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the borders of Decapolis. St. Matthew (xv. 29) simply says that he "departed thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee." But from the more full statement of St. Mark we learn that he made a circuit, going first northwards through Phœnicia, with Galilee on his right, as far as Sidon; and thence probably over the spurs of Libanus to Damascus, mentioned by Pliny as one of the cities of the Decapolis. This would bring him probably through Cæsarea Philippi to the eastern coast of the Sea of Galilee. Here, according to St. Matthew, he remained for a time in the mountainous district above the plain; choosing this position apparently for the sake of quiet and retirement; as also that, being conspicuous to all from the mountain, he might there await the multitude coming to him, whether for instruction or for healing.

Ver. 32.—They bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech (*πῶφον καὶ μογιλάλον*). The radical sense of *κῶφός* (from *κόπτω*) is "blunt" or "dull;" and so it is used to represent both deafness and dumbness. But in St. Mark it means deafness as distinguished from dumbness (see ch. ix. 25). This patient, however, was not *ἄλαλος* absolutely, but *μογιλάλος*, i.e., he spoke with difficulty. Long-continued deafness is apt to produce imperfect utterance.

Ver. 33.—And he took him aside from the multitude privately. This was done, no doubt, to fix the attention of the afflicted man upon himself, and upon the fact that he was about to act upon his ears and his tongue. And he put (*ἔβαλε*)—literally, cast or thrust—his fingers into his ears. The action was very significant. It was as though he said, "I am about to open a passage for hearing through these ears." And he spat, and touched his tongue; that is, he touched his tongue with saliva from his own sacred lips. These symbolical actions must have had a great meaning for the afflicted man. They were a *tableau vivant*, an acted metaphor, teaching him what he might expect from the mercy of Christ. The analogy of the miracle recorded in St. John (ix. 6) should be noticed here. It is an interesting circumstance (noticed in the 'Speaker's Commentary') that, in the Latin Church, the officiating priest touches the nostrils and ears of those who are to be baptized, with saliva from his own mouth. We may be assured that, in the case before us, these signs used by our Lord were intended to awaken the afflicted man's faith, and to stir up in him the lively expectation of a blessing.

Vers. 34, 35.—And looking up to heaven.

he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. He looked up to heaven, because from thence come all good things—words for the dumb, hearing for the deaf, healing for all infirmities; and thus he would teach the infirm man by a manifest sign to what quarter he was to look for the true source of his cure. *He sighed* (ἐστέναξε); literally, *he groaned*. Why did our Lord sigh at such a moment? We know indeed that he was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;” but now we might almost have expected a momentary smile of loving joy when he was about to give back to this afflicted man the use of these valuable instruments of thought and action. But he sighed even then; for he was touched with the feeling of human infirmity, and no doubt his comprehensive eye would take in the vast amount of misery, both bodily and spiritual, which has come upon the world through sin; and this, too, immediately after having looked up to heaven, and thought of the realm of bliss which for a time he had left “for us men, and for our salvation.” *Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.* This word is, of course, addressed to the man himself; and the evangelist has retained the original Syro-Chaldaic word, as he has retained “*Talitha cumi*” elsewhere; so that the actual word which passed through the Saviour’s lips, and restored speech and hearing to the afflicted, might be handed on, as doubtless it will be, to the end of time.

The word applies of course, primarily, though not exclusively, to the ear; for not only were his ears opened; but the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

Vers. 36, 37.—He charged them (διετέλλετο). The word is a strong one: “he gave them clear and positive orders.” The injunction seems to have been given, both to the deaf and dumb man, and to those who brought him. And it was given partly, no doubt, for his own sake, and for reasons connected with his gradual manifestation of himself to the world, and partly for the instruction of his disciples, and to show that he did not desire by his miracles to win the vain applause of men. St. Augustine says that “our Lord desired, by putting this restraint upon them, to teach how much more fervently they ought to preach him, whom he commissions to preach, when they who were forbidden could not be silent.” He hath done all things well. He did nothing that the Pharisees, captious and envious as they were, could reasonably find fault with. St. Matthew (xv. 30, 31) intimates that at this time our Lord exhibited a vast number of miracles, a bright galaxy of wonders, amongst which this shone out conspicuously, as a very prominent and instructive one. But, indeed, “he went about doing good.” His whole life on earth was one connected, continued manifestation of loving kindness.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—23.—Ceremonialism and spirituality. The teaching of our Lord Jesus was often in opposition to that of the religious leaders of his age and nation. The Pharisees and scribes were most religious, but their religion was of a bad type. They themselves practised, and they inculcated upon the people, the observance of religious forms and ceremonies; whilst, generally speaking, they were negligent of the weightier matters of the Law. They laid great stress upon the outward, but they were careless of the spiritual. Our Lord’s teaching, on the contrary, exalted the spiritual, and insisted upon the supreme importance of a true, a pure, a reverent heart. The contrast between ceremonialism and spirituality is exhibited in this passage in several particulars.

I. CEREMONIALISM SUBSTITUTES WASHING WITH WATER FOR PURITY OF HEART. Ablutions occupied an important place in the system of ritual. In addition to the washings and sprinklings required by the Law, many others were invented by the superstitious. It was a religious duty to wash the hands before eating and upon returning from market; to sprinkle and cleanse ceremonially cups and pots, vessels and furniture. In contradistinction from all these ritual purifications, our Lord laid stress upon the true baptism, the washing and purifying of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

II. CEREMONIALISM SUBSTITUTES THE TRADITIONS OF THE ELDERS FOR THE COMMANDS OF GOD. The Jews were a nation highly conservative in character and habit. They cherished their history, they revered the memory of their heroes, they treasured and superstitiously honoured their sacred books, and any doctrines or practices which came down from antiquity were, by that fact, commended to their respect. Their fault here was in magnifying the precepts of men rather than the commands of God. Human interpretations, human additions, human corruptions of the Word, were put in the place

of the Word itself. The Lord Jesus came not to destroy, but to fulfil the Law; yet with mere tradition he would have no truce.

III. CEREMONIALISM SUBSTITUTES THE WORSHIP OF THE LIPS FOR THE WORSHIP OF THE HEART. This was an old error and fault. The prophet Isaiah had seen reason to complain of its prevalence among the Hebrews of his time; and, as it is the product of sinful human nature, it need not surprise us if we meet with instances of the working of the principle of formality in any nation and in any age. Our Lord Jesus had frequent occasion to censure the vain repetitions, the prayers in the market-places, which he knew were in many cases the proof, not of a devout but of a hypocritical nature. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

IV. CEREMONIALISM SUBSTITUTES A SUBTLE EVASION FOR FILIAL DUTY. Natural piety concurs with the revealed commandment, in requiring of children honour and reverence towards their parents. To support them when in old age and poverty has ever been deemed a plain duty and, indeed, a true privilege. The way in which the unrighteous but religious Jews evaded this obligation is characteristic. Whatever a parent needed, the son declared to be dedicated to God, and therefore not applicable to the relief of the parent's wants. Such a device was hateful in the eyes of the holy and affectionate Saviour, who not only condemned unfilial conduct, but still more the mean hypocrisy which could use religion for its cloak.

V. CEREMONIALISM SUBSTITUTES AVOIDANCE OF UNCLEAN FOOD FOR AVOIDANCE OF IMPURE AND MALICIOUS THOUGHTS. Even Christ's disciples found it difficult to understand their Master's position with regard to clean and unclean food. The distinction was in itself recognized by the Law, but additions were made by human ingenuity, and the distinction itself was exaggerated, so as to imply more than was divinely intended. In the exercise of his authority, he "made all meats clean." He taught that sin works not from without inwardly, but from within outwardly; that the heart of man needs to be guarded against sinful thoughts and desires, in order that the life may be just, peaceful, and pure.

APPLICATION. It is possible to be, in a sense, religious, and yet, in a deeper sense, sinful, and out of harmony with the mind and will of God. It is a temptation from which none is wholly free, to substitute the external, the formal, the apparent, for what God requires—the faith, love, and loyalty of the heart. Hence the need of a good heart, which must be a new heart—the gift and the creation of God by his Spirit. The religion of the New Testament both enjoins this and provides for its acquirement. He who is "in Christ" is a new creation; and having the fountain cleansed, sends forth pure and purifying streams.

Vers. 24—30.—*The alien's faith.* In quest of repose and retirement, the Lord Jesus often, even during the busiest periods of his ministry, withdrew from crowded cities and busy shores to some accessible seclusion. On this occasion he travelled to the borders of Phœnicia, but though so far from his accustomed resorts, he was known and sought and followed. From Tyre and Sidon people had already, attracted by his fame, found their way to the neighbourhood of Capernaum, to hear his discourses and to behold his works. No wonder that now, even in these distant regions, though desiring retirement, the Divine Prophet "could not be hid." Hence the application recorded in this touching and encouraging narrative. We observe here—

I. FAITH ARISING IN UNFAVOURABLE CIRCUMSTANCES. A woman—described as a Canaanite, a Gentile—appealed to Jesus for help. Probably a heathen, she yet had confidence in the power of the Hebrew Rabbi and Prophet to bring her some relief. It is singular that two conspicuous instances of faith in Christ during his ministry—this, and that of the centurion—should be displayed by Gentiles. And this when many of our Lord's own countrymen despised and rejected the Son of David! Yet every preacher of the gospel has met with cases which show us that faith springs up where it is least expected, and in circumstances the least favourable. An inducement this for the Christian sower to "sow beside all waters."

II. FAITH PROMPTING TO INTERCESSION. Personal faith will lead to pleading prayer. This was the faith of a mother, concerned for her afflicted daughter, possessed by an unclean spirit. Maternal love incited to the appeal, and sustained under discouragement and rebuffs. True faith will ever lead to action, and will impel the anxious soul

to lay its anxieties before a mighty and compassionate Lord. We cannot be satisfied to come to Christ for ourselves alone; for those dear to our hearts some true request will be preferred, some petition will be urged. The heart's compassionate impulse the Lord of the heart will not despise.

III. FAITH REPULSED AND SORELY TRIED. The language addressed by Jesus to this woman was certainly unlike what he was wont to address to suppliant. His mission was to Israel; the bread he brought for Israel's sons; Canaanites and all Gentiles were but as dogs, having no claim upon the provision made for the household of the favoured. It is mysterious, yet it is unquestionable, that it seems good to God to "try" the faith of men. So Jehovah had tried Abraham, and so Jesus now tried this poor, pitiable woman. He will try your faith; but misunderstand not his treatment of you.

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head."

IV. FAITH TRIUMPHANT. The woman neither resented the Lord's comparison nor did she, disheartened by the reception she met with, turn away without a blessing. She took the Lord at his word, and followed out his figure. "Be it so; let the bread, the loaf, be for the children; let the dogs keep their proper place; yet, even there, surely there is some provision even for them. There are crumbs, and with these the dogs may be content; for these the dogs may be grateful." This is the way to plead with Heaven. God will have earnestness and persistency and perseverance in prayer. Christ's grace is ever for those who seek, and who seek not fitfully, but resolutely and enduringly.

V. FAITH RECOGNIZED AND REWARDED. Christ was pleased because the applicant cast herself upon his compassion, because she was willing to receive the boon desired upon his own terms. "For this saying go thy way." It was a saying expressing so much humility, so much earnestness, so much faith, that the heart from which it came might not remain unsatisfied, unblest. The evangelist tells, in a way very picturesque and affecting, how, upon her return to her house, the poor woman found that the power had been exercised, that the demon had departed, and that her daughter was healed.

APPLICATION. The narrative (1) affords encouragement to offer intercessory prayer; (2) shows the value of humility in our approach to Jesus; and (3) assures us that persevering faith shall not be unrewarded.

Vers. 31—37.—The deaf hears; the dumb speaks. In this incident is much of the dramatic. It could not well be otherwise. Our Lord's teaching was usually by speech, but this was a case in which oral language was needless and useless. Christ accordingly employed the language of gesture and action. He thus adapted himself and his ministry to the necessities of this poor man, who was doubly afflicted with privation of hearing and of speech. The condition of the sufferer and the conduct of the Healer are alike symbolical of spiritual facts and suggestive of spiritual lessons.

I. A PICTURE OF THE SINNER'S STATE. 1. Here is an insight into the *nature of human depravity*. It is a distortion of, a departure from, the proper, the higher, and original nature. Man, in his true bodily constitution, possesses hearing and speech, and in his true spiritual constitution he has faculties which bring him into communion with the Divine. The privation of such capacity by sin is pictured by the *state of this sufferer*. 2. Here is *insensibility to Divine realities*. Voices, music, thunder, are all to the deaf as though they were not. So with the sinner; he hears not the tones of the Divine voice; the Word of God is nothing to him—has neither authority nor charm. The dumb cannot speak or sing; whatever the occasion for utterance, the occasion appeals to him in vain. So with the sinner; he has no witness to offer to the God of creation, providence, and grace. 3. Here is *deprivation of the highest joys*. How much of happiness is inaccessible to those who are afflicted with deafness! Nature, art, and friendly voices have no message for their ears. And, similarly, sin closes the approaches of highest spiritual joys to the spiritual nature of the children of sinful men. 4. Here is helplessness and hopelessness. It is not a pleasant or a flattering picture; but is it not true?

II. A VIEW OF THE SAVIOUR AND OF THE PROCESS OF SALVATION. Remark: 1. The *individual character* of salvation. As Jesus took this deaf man apart from the crowd, that he might deal with him privately and by himself, so the Lord ever singles out each individual whom he saves. Sometimes he lays such a one aside by affliction, quietly to converse with him and work upon his nature. 2. Salvation is *through Christ's personal contact* with the soul. When Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears and anointed his tongue with spittle, this was a striking and effective lesson to one who could not be reached by the usual channel of articulate speech. It was the touch of Christ, and the communication of his virtue, that healed. A lesson to us that restoration to spiritual capacity and health is the effect of an immediate contact of the soul with Christ, the soul's Saviour. 3. A profoundly *compassionate Saviour*. "He sighed;" not simply because of this instance which he encountered of human misery and need, but doubtless also because of all the world's sin and misery. His was a heart moved at the spectacle of the wretchedness of this fallen race. His work of redemption was inspired by pity and by love. 4. An *authoritative Saviour*. The word of Jesus, "Be opened!" reminds us of the original and authoritative utterance of the Creator, "Let there be light!" It is thus that the Lord of light and vision ever speaks: he utters his royal command as one who is certain to be obeyed.

III. A REPRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS OF SALVATION. Simple as is the record of the mandate and summons of Immanuel, equally simple is the record of the success which attended his word. The response to the command was immediate. Similarly with the release which it is the prerogative of our Redeemer to effect for the soul of man. The nature which Christ renews becomes sensitive to those heavenly voices to which it has so long been deaf, and finds delight in holy and grateful utterances to which it has before been utterly strange.

IV. AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE IMPRESSION PRODUCED BY THE EXERCISE OF CHRIST'S POWER. 1. Astonishment; for who but he can work such marvels? 2. Publication; for the healed, and the beholders of the Redeemer's change, are unable to restrain themselves—are impelled to tell the story of redemption and deliverance. 3. Witness and praise; for such must needs be offered to him of whom it is said, "He hath done all things well."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—23.—*Externalism versus righteousness*. In vers. 3, 4 of this chapter we are furnished with an interesting piece of antiquarianism. The daily life of the devout Jew is set before us in its ceremonial aspect; not as Moses had originally ordered it, but as custom and human casuistry had gradually transformed it. The light thrown upon several questions is very searching and full of revelation, viz. the various senses in which *baptism* seems to have been understood by the contemporaries of Christ, and the punctilio, vigour, and detail with which ceremonial purifications were carried out. It is only as we realize the background of daily Jewish life, against which the life to which Jesus called his disciples stood out so prominently, that we are in a position to appreciate the current force of the objections raised by Pharisees and scribe. We have here—

I. CHRISTIANITY CRITICIZED FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF RELIGIOUS TRADITION. (Vers. 1—5.) The exaggerated form the latter assumed brought out the more strikingly the peculiarity and essential character of Christ's teaching. 1. *It was an age in which Jewish ceremonialism had reached its highest*. The doctrine of Pharisaism had penetrated the common life of the people. They might be said to have fallen in love with it. The distinctions are artificial and super-refined, e.g. between "common," "profane," or "defiled" hands, and hands ceremonially clean. They washed "diligently" (a paraphrase of the original substituted by our revisers for "oft" of the Authorized Version, and apparently the best rendering of the difficult word in the original), "carefully," or "thoroughly;" and no detail or minute application was forgotten of the "many other things" "which they have received to hold" (i.e. to hold fast, retain). Amongst the respectable Jewish ceremonial strictness and nicety held a place very similar to what "good manners," or polite behaviour and refinement, occupy with ourselves, having, of course, an additional supernatural sanction from association with the Law. Thus

to-day the customs and observances of nations amongst whom civilization has long existed might equally serve as a foil for the Christian moralist; and all *casuistries* or secondary, *customary moralities*. 2. *The objectors were the leaders and representatives of the religious life of the time.* "Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which had come from Jerusalem." They were the leaders and teachers of metropolitan fanatical ritualism. It is well when Christianity is judged that such men appear on the bench; there can then be no question as to the representative and authoritative character of the criticism. It would be a splendid thing if the representatives of modern political, social, and ecclesiastical life could be convened for such a purpose. 3. *What, then, is the objection thus raised?* *It concerned an observance of daily life.* Christians are now judged on the same arena. In small things as in large the difference will reveal itself. *It depended upon an abstract distinction:* the hand might be *actually* clean when it was not *ceremonially* so. It was, in the eyes of those who made it, *the worst accusation they had it in their power to make.* The moral life of the disciples was irreproachable; they "had wronged no man, corrupted no man, taken advantage of no man." The Christians of to-day ought to emulate this blamelessness; infidels can then fire only blank cartridge.

II. THE TABLES TURNED. (Vers. 6—23.) The critics are themselves reviewed. Trifling captiousness must be summarily dealt with, especially when it wears the garb of authority. The *character* of the objectors is of the first consequence in judging of Christ's tone. Grave issues were at stake. The *ground* of the fault-finding was superficial and untrustworthy, and a truer criterion must be discovered. "Deceivers may be denounced, that the deceived may be delivered" (Godwin). The essential nature of rectitude—the grand moral foundations must be laid bare. 1. *Christ begins with an appeal to Scripture.* He is careful to show that the distinction between righteousness and ritualism is a scriptural one, and not of his own invention. At the same time, he gives the reference a satirical or ironical turn by making a *prophetic identification!* We don't know how much is lost in ignoring the written Word of God. It is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness." 2. *He next pointed out the opposition that existed between their traditions and the Law.* The instance selected is a crucial one, viz. that of the fifth commandment—"the first commandment with promise." Others might have been given, but that would be sufficient. Family obligations are the inner circle in which religion most intensely operates; if a man is wrong there, he is not likely to be very righteous elsewhere. To prove their opposition to the Law was to strip them of all pretence to religion. 3. *Lastly, common sense and conscience were appealed to as regarded rites and ceremonies.* The "multitude" is here addressed; it is a point which the common man is supposed able to decide. There are many weapons that may thus be supplied to the evangelical armoury. If philosophy was rescued from barrenness by this method in the hands of a Socrates or a Reid, may we not hope for greater things with regard to a common-sense religion? The great foundation of all religious definitions and obligations is the *true nature of man*. The essential being of man is spiritual; the body is only the garment or case in which he dwells. Purity or its opposite must therefore be judged of from that standpoint. If the soul, will, spirit, inner thought of a man is pure, he is wholly pure. Spiritual and ceremonial cleanness must not be confounded. Religion is not a matter of forms, ceremonies, or anything merely outside; but of the heart. Yet the thought and will must influence the outward action, habit, and life. The spiritual is the only eternal religion (John iv. 23, 24). The private question of the disciples is worthy of notice. A "parable" seems to have been their common name for a difficult saying of Christ's. Their incapacity was not intellectual but spiritual. Professed Christians themselves often require to be more fully instructed. The progressive life of the true Christian will itself solve many problems. "Had our Saviour been speaking as a physiologist, he would have admitted and contended that *many things from without*, if allowed to enter within, will corrupt the functions of physical life, and carry disorder and detriment into the whole fabric of the frame. But he was speaking as a moralist, and hence the *antithetic statement* of the next clause (cf. ver. 15)" (Morison).—M.

Vers. 24—30.—*The prayer of the Syro-phenician woman.* An atmosphere of publicity about Christ: crowds follow him wherever they hear of his presence, and

even in strange regions his fame anticipates him. The many who took advantage of his power to heal are forgotten in the special case which now presented itself. This may have been the spiritual result of many unsatisfactory cases in which the cure only affected the body; the rumour of them awoke at least one heart to a new sense of spiritual power. Speaking about Jesus and his work in this place or that, to one soul or another, may be a blessing in unthought-of quarters. Jesus "could not be hid" for other reasons; his disciples were with him, and, more than all, he carried about in himself a revelation of love and pity that spoke to every heart. Spiritual influence is a mysterious thing, and yet there are some conditions of its exercise which are only too plainly declared. Matthew has a fuller account, but our evangelist gives us the chief details. The Saviour was touching the great world outside of Judaism, the scene of his greater ministry in the future through the Holy Spirit. The incident is remarkable, as suggesting this universal relation of him who as yet was but a Jewish Rabbi. It tells us the nature of the limitation which hemmed in his work, and how that limitation was to be removed, when he "should open the door of faith to the Gentiles."

I. AT THE DOOR OF MERCY. (Vers. 25, 26.) 1. *The motive.* It was not for herself, but her child, whose distress she sought to relieve. The nature of this "unclean spirit." Moral parallels. A mother's instinct: how near the human affections and family obligations bring us to the gospel! The instinct is a natural one, but tending to the spiritual. She was in the school of sorrow, noble and unselfish sorrow, which searches the heart and awakens the latent forces of the spiritual nature. How many have been brought by such sentiments and experiences to the cross! 2. *The attraction.* She had heard of him and his merciful works. We all stand in need of mercy, and are insensibly affected as we hear of its exercise upon others. Make known the Saviour, and proclaim his saving grace! *The most unlooked-for will come.* "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." But now she saw and heard himself. Her great yearning, grieving heart read the lineaments of his countenance, and the character they expressed. "He will not turn me away." Christ, by his spiritual presence in the Word, ever touches human hearts thus, awaking by what he is the deepest longings and most instinctive trust.

II. THE DOOR AJAR. (Ver. 27.) 1. *It sounds like a rebuff.* What claims has she upon him? But: 2. *Is really a trial of her faith.* It sounds logically conclusive, yet is it intended to call forth the inmost spiritual nature. Delays and adverse experiences in prayer should not all at once be accepted as final. Prayer is not a mere asking; it is a discipline. Remember Abraham's importunity. 3. *Encouragement is given even under the appearance of refusal.* Matthew tells us of a silence that preceded this; for Christ to speak was itself an omen not to be despised. "First" is a word that hints at postponement, not ultimate rejection. And the picture he sketches is not to be taken literally, but is for the spiritual imagination. As the reasoner, in making an induction, introduces an element into his reasoning that is not in the facts in themselves, so the petitioner at Heaven's throne must learn to interpret his experiences, and to sift the rejections that he may discover the elements of hope. Here the petitioner answers the objection by completing the picture in which it is couched. True, it would be wrong to cast the children's "loaf" to the dogs; but that is not the only conceivable way in which the dogs may be fed. Her Greek experience comes to her assistance. Whilst the Jews hated dogs as "unclean," and could not tolerate them in their houses, the Greeks had a peculiar affection for them, and tamed and trained them to feed from the hand. In many a Greek home the dog had its place beside the table or beneath it. And the "crumbs" found their way there in various ways, either by intention or accident. The term she uses is a diminutive of endearment. The twenty-eighth verse is full of diminutives—"little dogs," "little children's," and "little crumbs"—which are full of subtle, tender appeal. This is her argument, then. It is a self-humiliating one, for she is willing to take the dogs' place. She is not a Jewess—a "child;" she is only a Gentile, and her daughter is "a little dog." And here is the children's loaf—the Bread of life—at the very edge of the table. May not some "little crumbs" fall over? To such humility, such faith, there can be no refusal; and there was never intended to be one. This is how we must all come to Heaven's door—vile, miserable sinners, with no claim save upon the mercy of God!

III. THE DOOR OPENED. (Vers. 29, 30.) 1. *It is opened to faith.* "For this

saying." It was an inspiration of faith. She had found the master-key for all time, and as she used it the door flew open. If we but "ask in faith, nothing wavering," all our petitions will be granted. 2. *It is opened by Divine grace.* We are not to suppose the request granted because the feeling of Christ was wrought upon. The yielding has only a superficial appearance of being due to constraint. In reality the delay was but interpolated that the faith of the woman might be developed in her own soul and manifested to the Jewish spectators; and so the final answer would be justified on every hand, and prove a blessing to others beside the recipient. The cure is already effected when she returns home. 3. *It stands open for ever to such petitioners.* The ground of assent to her appeal having been "evidently set forth," she becomes a precedent for all believers to plead. She is the pioneer of all who, not being Jews according to the flesh, are nevertheless children of faithful Abraham according to the spirit. To all who thus believe the invitation is given, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."—M.

Vers. 31—37.—"*Ephphatha.*" A rest, then a fresh journey ("again"). How long the interval we cannot determine. To free him from embarrassment, perhaps danger, and allow time for spiritual meditation. "Tyre and Sidon." The best manuscripts have "*through Sidon*," which was north of Tyre. "Decapolis:" ten cities, east and south-east of Sea of Galilee; named by the Romans B.C. 65. A favourite scene of our Lord's labours (cf. Matt. iv. 25). In Matt. xv. 29—31 a multitude of cases is mentioned. Here one is singled out as an illustration.

I. THE CASE. Familiar and ordinary; comparatively helpless; difficult to educate, mentally and spiritually.

II. THE CURE. 1. *The manner of the great Physician.* "They beseech him to lay his hand upon him"—a grand expression. (1) With respect to the people. He does not like the publicity, etc., and so he withdraws the poor man from the excited crowd. (2) With respect to the patient. This step was full of consideration and delicacy. He sought to gain the confidence of the man. How deliberate and thoughtful was his mercy! 2. *The means employed.* (1) Of what kinds. Physical—touch, saliva. Devotional—a heavenward look, a heavenward sigh. Authoritative—a word, "Ephphatha!" Not used as a charm, but plainly intended to be otherwise understood; a word of the vernacular. (2) He spoke to the man through signs, as he could not understand words. The means were only *morally* necessary; that the man might have some basis for confidence, intelligence, and faith. He ever desired to be understood.

III. THAT WHICH IS SYMBOLIZED. The shut heart of the world, dead to spiritual things. Which is worse? Only the compassion of Christ can save us.—M.

Vers. 24 (first part).—*The seclusion of Jesus.* Our Lord, during his ministry, frequently sought retirement, and the text mentions one of these occasions. Seclusion is sometimes coveted by his disciples from improper motives, but these found no lodgment in the heart of the sinless One. We sometimes withdraw from active service for God because a feeling of indolence creeps over us, but he constantly found it to be his meat and drink to do the will of his Father in heaven. We sometimes shrink back from suspicions and reproaches in a spirit of cowardice, whereas in Christ there was no trace of the fear of man, that brings a snare. Nor did he ever exhibit the slightest indication of the selfishness which leads us to shut ourselves up in the narrow circle of our petty personal interests. On the contrary, his whole life, the fact of his living here at all, the death which he could easily have averted, conclusively showed that he "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." We may at once and confidently set aside any explanation of Christ's withdrawal from a place or people which is drawn from some supposed imperfection in him who was absolutely sinless. At the same time, we must remember that we cannot always discover with certainty the reasons for our Lord's actions, not only because these are not mentioned by the evangelists, who never try to explain or justify what may be open to misrepresentation, but also because his nature transcended ours, and his acts had issues not only here but in an unseen world. So that whenever we suggest explanations of his conduct, we must say to ourselves, "Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him!"

I. OCCASIONAL SECLUSION WAS GOOD FOR THE LORD HIMSELF. He was as truly the Son of man as the Son of God. His life would not have been complete, it would not have touched ours at so many points, if he had always worked and never waited. Hence, though he had to do a work so stupendous that it would affect the destinies of the world, and of the unseen universe of God, there are no signs in his life of bustle or impatience. He waited thirty years before he preached the gospel; and although he allowed himself only three short years for public ministry, he broke off from it again and again; and when at work he was so unhurried that he could stop in his progress to Jerusalem to heal a blind beggar, or halt on his way to save a dying child in order to heal and teach a poor woman in the crowd that thronged him. What a lesson to us in this fast-living age! What a rebuke to our feverish anxiety and excitement! Doubtless we should have to sacrifice something to break off from work as our Master did; indeed, this is one modern form of taking up our cross to follow him. It will be a fatal mistake to let business hustle prayer out of our life. The busy Christ could sometimes be alone, and he could not have been all he is to us if he had not been so. In the wilderness of temptation he was alone, and the real struggle of every human life is fought out and won in the presence of him who sees in secret. The greatest agony of Christ was endured in solitude; and in our Gethsemane friends fail us, but our God is near. It is good to be alone, if only we are alone with God, as Jesus was.

II. THE OCCASIONAL SECLUSION OF OUR LORD WAS GOOD FOR OTHERS. It was well for the disciples that they should be sometimes withdrawn, with their Master, from circumstances in which they would be harmed by men's applause or overwrought by nervous excitement; but besides this, Christ's withdrawal would benefit some who were not his disciples. 1. *It was a possible means of grace to his foes.* When the rage of the Pharisees was intensely aroused (and no anger is more unreasoning and devilish than that which professedly bases itself on religious conviction), it was well for them that the object of their wrath should disappear for a time. Christ's withdrawal saved them again and again from the awful crime which they committed at last on Calvary; it allowed for the subsidence of hasty excitement, which prejudiced them, and gave them time and opportunity for recovering better and wiser thoughts about the Lord. The loving Saviour would fain have helped even those who hated him. 2. *It was for the advantage of the mass of his hearers.* They saw his miracles, marvelled at them, discussed them, crowded to see more—without the least perception of their spiritual significance; so that if the series of miracles had been unbroken they would have failed of their purpose. 3. *It was for the good of those who needed him that he should be sought.* This is clearly exemplified in the experience of this woman of Syro-phenicia. The disciples tried to drive her away. But Jesus meant her to come, had gone thither partly that she might come, gave her rebuffs which aroused yet more her apprehension of want; and so tested and developed her faith as to make her ready to receive the great blessing he longed to give. If Christ does not reveal himself so unmistakably to us as we wish, it is because he sees that we may win a higher benediction when we obey his command, "Seek, and ye shall find."—A. R.

Ver. 24 (latter part).—*He could not be hid.* On several occasions when Jesus sought retirement it was denied him, either by the enthusiastic zeal of his followers or by the pressing need of those who had heard of his fame. Still he seems to hide himself, and yet from no earnest seeker can he be hidden. In respect to many things besides the saving knowledge of Christ, it may be said they can only be discovered by diligent search. Our present knowledge of the physical world has come to us through those who would not be denied in their eager exploration. The forces of nature, too, have not obtruded themselves in their various uses, but have been won to our service by costly experiments and diligent thought. Speaking broadly, all life is an experiment—a discovery. A child learns to judge distances by trying to grasp what is within reach; he discovers the limit of strength by falls and hurts; he prattles before he talks. Very little of what we know has come intuitively. It sought to hide itself, but because we could not do without it we strove after it, and from us it "could not be hid." If in regard to other good things these words are true, it is not unreasonable that they should be true of him who is the highest good our souls can have or eternity can reveal. Our text implies, what other verses explicitly assert, that Christ, in the full plenitude of

his salvation, does not come to us when we are spiritually inert, but that when the Holy Spirit has shown us that we need him, and when we seek him, he must be found of us. But if we spurn him he will hide himself, till he will have to say of us, concerning the things that would give us peace, "But now they are hid from thine eyes." The truth on which we wish to lay stress is this—that even in the days of his earthly ministry, whether Jesus was found as a Saviour or not depended on the condition of those who sought him. It was not a question of place, but of purpose. Contrast this story with the incident narrated in the first part of the preceding chapter. There we read of his visit to Nazareth, his own city, where we should expect he would be most eagerly sought after and most rich in blessings; but he could not reveal himself there as he wished to do, "because of their unbelief." Now, on the borders of a heathen district, the inhabitants of which had been shut out from the blessings of the covenant, there was a certain woman, a Gentile by birth, a heathen by religion, who wanted to find him, and from her "he could not be hid." Character may be, but circumstances cannot be, a barrier between the soul and Christ.

I. CHRIST CANNOT BE HID, BECAUSE GREAT NEED WILL SEEK HIM OUT. It was so with her who, poor and ill, crept into the crowd and touched the hem of his garment; with the sisters of Bethany, who sent the message, "He whom thou lovest is sick;" with the woman who was a sinner, who ventured into the Pharisee's house to find him; and with this Canaanite, who made her way to the Jewish Teacher, who, so far as she knew, had never before blessed one outside the house of Israel. It is God's design in our bodily illnesses, in our bereavements, in our grief about children going wrong, to lead us to the feet of him who never has said, "Seek ye my face in vain."

II. CHRIST CANNOT BE HID, BECAUSE TRUE LOVE WILL SURELY FIND HIM. True love in a parent or lover will give persistence and hope in the search for one who is lost. So will love to him who is worthy of the highest affection lead us to his presence.

III. CHRIST CANNOT BE HID, BECAUSE EARNEST FAITH WILL EVER LEAD TO HIM. The shepherds of Bethlehem who heard the angels' song believed its message, and found the holy Child. The wise men from the East, being faithful to the light they had, at last bowed at the feet of the Light of the world. Let us not suffer our doubts to prevent the outgoings of our soul to the Lord.

IV. CHRIST CANNOT BE HID, BECAUSE HIS OWN HEART WILL BETRAY HIM. Recall the pathetic story of Joseph. When he was the lord of Egypt, and his brethren came as suppliants to him, his heart could scarce contain itself, and at last the strength of his love forced him to avow himself and to welcome them to his heart. But that is only a faint emblem of the nobler love which filled the heart of the Son of God. Heaven could not hold it; the cross could not check it; the grave could not keep it back from his people. All through his life you see the outgoings of that mighty love. If his disciples are toiling in rowing, he will walk right over the raging waves to comfort them. If after his resurrection he stands as a stranger beside Mary, it can only be for a moment, for, like the good shepherd, he will soon call her by name, that she may be glad in his love. Still he stands among his disciples, and there his heart bewrays itself.

V. CHRIST CANNOT BE HID, BECAUSE HIS DISCIPLES WILL MAKE HIM KNOWN. In spite of the unfaithfulness of many, he has never been without his witnesses. The healed demoniac went back to his home to tell what Jesus had done for him; Andrew no sooner found the Messiah than he went to tell his own brother Simon. So the witness-bearing is to continue till the whole earth is filled with his glory.—A. R.

Ver. 32.—*Deaf and dumb.* Christ's acts of healing were very often performed while he was passing from place to place. This occurred on his way from the borders of Tyre and Sidon to the eastern side of the Lake of Galilee. His life was like a river, which not only, when it reaches the sea, bears mighty fleets on its bosom, but carries blessings all along its course through secluded pastures and quiet corn-fields. The case of this man was one of physical infirmity and not of demoniac possession. He was deaf, and had an infirmity in his speech. In considering the spiritual significance of a miracle, we must not overlook or underrate the physical blessing. Such an act of healing as this is the germ whence innumerable good works have come. Institutions for the deaf, hospitals for the sick, homes for the crippled, are the smiling harvest arising from this seed-sowing; and the signs by which the deaf and dumb are now

taught find their principle in the signs which our Lord, in loving condescension, used in dealing with this afflicted man. The spirit of Christ reigns over and blesses the bodies of men still. If we have the use of all our faculties, and know nothing of the irritability of the deaf, the loneliness of the blind, and the agony of the dumb, let us not only be thankful, but let us remember our responsibility for their use, lest we fall into condemnation because we close our ears against the truth and refuse to move our lips in prayer. Let us also learn to cultivate pity for those who are not so richly endowed, allowing for the irritability of those who can only partly hear, and the cynicism to which the dumb and blind are tempted, and seeking to become eyes to the blind and ears to the deaf. "Be merciful, as your Father in heaven is merciful." Be pitiful and gentle, as he who sighed over and then blessed the sufferer. The spiritual significance of this act of healing is the more important, because deafness to God's voice and dumbness in his praise are more general, and less manifest to others than the physical privations which are their counterparts. In this light regard the sufferer and observe—

I. THAT HE WAS DESTITUTE OF TWO OF OUR NOBLEST FACULTIES. In those days there existed none of the mitigations of such distress with which we are familiar, and which are the products of patient and skilful training. He could not hear his children's voices, nor the cry of warning, nor the whisper of love. All that transpired in the synagogue was but dumb-show to him. He could not take refuge from loneliness in reading, as we can do. His wants he could not articulately express. When we see a child as yet unable to talk we are glad that his wants are limited, simple, well known, and easily supplied. But this sufferer had the thoughts and feelings of a man, yet could not utter them. In our congregations, and outside them, multitudes fail to hear God's voice. The preacher speaks of sin, but there is no consciousness of it stirred in their hearts; he proclaims free pardon, yet there is no sense of grateful acceptance. Voices around are eloquent of the Father's love to a Christian, but by these they are unheard. Meanwhile their voices are inarticulate on God's side. If a word of warning ought to be spoken, is the cause of Christ to be defended, if there are vices which a God of sobriety and purity would destroy, these are dumb, or are as men who have an impediment in their speech.

II. THAT THESE FACULTIES WERE MUTUALLY DEPENDENT. He was not absolutely dumb, but was inarticulate in utterance; therefore, after his cure, it is said "he spake plain." It is true he had some physical defect, for we read, "the string of his tongue was loosed;" but it is evident that he could not speak aright, partly because he could not hear—perversion of speech being a general accompaniment of total deafness, for a deaf person cannot detect and alter his malpronunciations. There is a connection in spiritual life between the similar faculties of the soul. If we try to teach others, we must be taught of God. The ear must be opened before the mouth speaks plainly, and unless they be, the fluent talker is but a poor stammerer in spiritual utterance. Right speaking is conditioned by right hearing. If, therefore, the habit of evil or foolish talk has been acquired, it is not enough to vow that it shall be broken off, for it is "out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh." The fountain wants change, not the channel. Such a one must give up light reading for a time of earnest reflection, must keep clear of vain and idle companionships, and, above all, cultivate fellowship with God, the Source of all wise and holy thought.

III. THAT HE WAS BROUGHT TO THE TRUE PHYSICIAN. Satan is the great destroyer and damager, and Christ is the great Repairer and Redeemer. Let us bring our friends to him by counsel, by sympathy, and by prayer.

IV. THAT HE LEFT HIMSELF IN THE LORD'S HANDS. Friends asked the Lord to lay his hands on the sufferer, probably because they had seen him do this before. But Christ was divinely free, was far broader in method than their expectations, and he took him by the hand—not to cure him by that touch, but to lead him apart; and with this Stranger the helpless man was satisfied trustfully to go. Let us leave our Lord to do with us and with our dear ones as seems good to him. Though he may deal with us differently from his dealing with others, his choice is wisest and best.—A. R.

Vers. 33—35.—*A typical cure.* In our Lord's different acts of healing there were remarkable variations of method. We should expect this of the Son of the *Creator*, whose variety in nature is infinite. No two leaves in the forest are alike—no two faces in a

flock of sheep; and even the same sea changes in its aspect from hour to hour. This variety is greater as we go higher in the scale of creation, and is most conspicuous in man, whether considered individually or collectively. And Christ Jesus was the Image of the invisible God, who is *omniscient*. He knew the avenue to every heart, and how best to win affection or arouse praise. If there was one string in the harp which could be made tuneful, he could touch it. Hence the variety in his method of dealing with those who came to him. One was called upon for public avowal, and another was charged to tell no man; one was cured by a word, another by a touch; the servant of the centurion was healed at a distance, but of the lunatic boy Jesus said, "Bring him hither unto me." Bartimæus was suddenly restored, but this man was gradually given his speech and hearing. This change in mode was not from outward hindrance to the Lord's power, nor because that power was intermittent, but because he put restraint on himself for the sake of the sufferer or of the observers. Mark appears to have taken special interest in cases of gradual restoration. It is not because he would minimize the miraculous element, as some suggest, but possibly because, seeing in all miracles types of what was spiritual, he saw his own experience more clearly in these. He had been brought up under holy influences. As a lad he had heard the Word in the house of his mother Mary, and had been gradually enlightened, like the blind man at Bethsaida; or like this man, without abrupt suddenness, had his ears opened and his tongue loosed to glorify the God of Israel. The method of this sufferer's cure is given in detail, and deserves consideration.

I. JESUS LED HIM APART FROM OTHERS, dealing with him as with the blind man, whom he also took by the hand and led out of the town. This, we think, was not "to avoid ostentation," nor to prevent distraction in his own prayer, but for the man's good. Christ would be with him alone, and so concentrate attention on himself. He took him into solitude that he might receive deeper spiritual impressions, and that the first voice he heard might be the voice of his Lord. It is always good for men to be alone with God, as was Moses in Midian, David watching his flock at Bethlehem, Elijah in the cave at Horeb, and others. Our quietest times are often spiritually our most growing times—illness, bereavement, etc.

II. JESUS BROUGHT HIM INTO VITAL CONTACT WITH HIMSELF. "He but his fingers," etc. We must remember that the man could not speak nor hear, but he could feel and see, and therefore what was done met the necessities of his affliction. With his finger Jesus touched his ear, as if to say, "I am going to cure that;" then, with finger moistened with saliva, he touched his tongue, to show that it was a going out of himself which would restore him. The man was brought into vital contact with Christ, as the child was brought close to the prophet who stretched himself upon him. Our Lord seeks that personal contact of our spirit with his, because the first necessity of redemption is to stir faith in himself. The man yielded to all the Saviour did—watched his signs and expected his word of power; and it is for that expectant faith he so often waits.

III. JESUS RAISED HIS THOUGHTS TO HEAVEN. He looked up to heaven. Watching that loving face, the sufferer saw the Lord look up with ineffable earnestness, love, and trust; and the effect of this would be that he would say to himself, "Then I also should pray, 'O God of my fathers, hear me!'" We are called upon, in the light of Christ's example, to look above the means we use for discipline or instruction, and away from ourselves and outward influences to the heavenly Father, who is neither fiftful nor indifferent to our deepest needs.

IV. JESUS MADE HIM CONSCIOUS OF PERSONAL SYMPATHY. "He sighed." It was not a groan in prayer, but a sigh of pity, that escaped him when he gazed on this sufferer, and realized, as we cannot do, the devastation and death wrought by sin, of which this was a sign. Even with us it is the one concrete case of suffering which makes all suffering vivid. With that feeling we must undertake Christian work. Sometimes we are busy, but our hands are cold and hard; and when our heads are keen to devise, our hearts too often are slow to feel. But when we, followers of Christ, look on those deaf and indifferent to God, who never repent or pray, and who are sinking into irreligion and pollution, we should yearn over them and pray for them with sighs and tears. If our hearts are heavy with pity, God will make our hands heavy with blessings. After the sighing and prayer came the word of power, "Ephphatha!"—"Be opened!"

and the sealed ear opened to his voice and the stammering tongue proclaimed his praise.
See Keble's lines—

"As thou hast touched our ears, and taught
Our tongues to speak thy praises plain,
Quell thou each thankless, godless thought
That would make fast our bonds again," etc.

CONCLUSION. Henceforth this man would be a living witness to Christ's power. Though it was expressly forbidden to blaze abroad his cure, all who saw him at home or at work would say, "That is the man whom Jesus healed." So let us go forth to live for Jesus, resolving that our words shall utter his praise and that our lives shall witness to his holiness, till at last another "Ephphatha!" shall be heard, and we pass through the golden gates, into the land where no ears are deaf and no tongues are mute.—A. R.

Vers. 1—23.—The ritual and the reality of purification. I. THE MOST NATURAL ACT MAY BE PERVERTED INTO A RITUAL SIN. The disciples were seen eating with unholy hands, that is, unwashed! How this came about we are not told; probably it was a case of necessity: there was no water to be had. Probably it was a choice between going without food and being ritually correct, or being ritually incorrect and supplying the wants of nature.

II. THE MEANING AND USE OF RITUAL IS CONSTANTLY LOST SIGHT OF BY SMALL MINDS. "The Pharisees and all the Jews, unless for a pygmy's length they wash the hands and arms, do not eat." The Talmud (Lightfoot) directs that the hands be washed to the elbow—a rule like that here hinted at; "pygmy" denoting the arm and hand. The custom went beyond what the original ritual required. And so the associations of the market-place were thought peculiarly profane. They carried the rule out in application to cups, jugs, copper vessels, and couches; things which cannot feel, which are not spiritual, and which therefore are no subjects of "baptism." The root of the error was: 1. Blind respect for custom. Custom commands our respect; but a blind respect defeats its end and meaning. 2. The reversal of the spiritual order. That order is: first the spiritual, then the material; the body for the soul. The Pharisaic order was: first the material, and the spiritual through the material. 3. The postponement of the present to the past. What tradition of the fathers can make it a duty to neglect the welfare of the sons? The rules of the past conserved the privileges of the present; if they block the way and tend to hurt human life, they must give way. We must study the *perspective* of duties if we do not desire to become narrow in intelligence, and defeat the spirit of law.

III. ATTACHMENT TO RITUAL MAY ACTUALLY OBSCURE THE VIEW OF RELIGIOUS DUTY. Religion begins in the heart. Unless we love our God and our fellow-man, we shall miserably blunder in our construction of duties. Great teachers have always placed us at this moral centre; face to face with God, in immediate relation to his universal imperative. 1. *Isaiah* (xxix. 13). He taught that the lips might readily be made to do duty for the heart; and that invented obediences might distract from the genuine, natural obedience of the right and loving heart. 2. *Moses*. To go back further in the stream of sacred tradition: no name more honoured than that of the great lawgiver of the desert. He distinctly enunciated the duty of filial reverence, founded on the instincts of the heart. How were the Pharisees carrying this out? The way in which Christ refers to this is keenly ironical. 3. Christ himself. The Pharisees can and do actually evade the great command of filial piety under the show of obedience to the ceremonial Law. "By a *general* consecration to the temple of whatever might be useful to parents, it was made sacrilege to give anything to them, because whatever was given to them was included in the vow." A miserable trickery, cheating God of his due while seeming to obey him! Tradition may be so followed as to subvert its very essence; for there is no tradition respectable which does not enshrine Divine commands.

IV. THE TRUE VIEW OF PURITY RESTORED. 1. *Impurity is not from without but from within.* The external defilement may be cleansed away. It is not *part of the man*. The moral impurity *is*. It is only what the imagination conceives and the will

affirms that is real for us. "In morals and in religion the conscious mind is everything" (Godwin). 2. *This true view may require an effort to attain.* Strange! the disciples "could not quite see it!" "And he said to them, Are you also so inconsiderate?" And Christ must explain to them the lesson as to a class of tyros. Want of thoughtfulness in the mind is like want of stirring and raking to the garden-ground. The weeds and mosses soon creep. The man's thought is soon overrun by the trash of opinion and empty practice, if he will not think for himself. 3. *The human source of evil.* It lies in the thought, the fancy, or imagination. Lust "conceives" a thought of pleasure, clashing with the thought of right. The conception germinates, and brings forth a deed. But a splash of mud that we receive on our garments in crossing the street has no effect on our conscience. And generally, what we do not *adopt* as part of ourselves, cannot be imputed to us as sin. "What does not affect the moral character, cannot affect the relation of man to God" (Godwin).—J.

Vers. 24—30.—The heathen mother. I. THE HEATHEN AND THE JEW. 1. In general, *no relation could be more bitter*; no estrangement more wide. No modern analogy can well enable us to realize this. They were "wide as the poles asunder." 2. *Jesus the Reconciler.* In him there is neither Jew nor heathen. This sublime truth was first to be made clear by his own conduct. All truths must be represented in practice if the world is to receive them. Christ did not deal in the *sentiment* of unity. He did not propound a theory of humanity, nor of enthusiasm for humanity; he took the hand of the sufferer; he healed the sickness; he made reconciliation a *fact*. "Go thou and do likewise!"

II. THE IRONY OF CHRIST. We have all heard of the irony of Socrates. It was the jesting way the great master had of hinting the truth to the mind, which was concealed in words. Irony is often the disguise of sensitive and keenly truth-loving minds. Here he conceals tenderest compassion for the poor woman under the mask of sarcasm. It has the effect of eliciting her deep feeling—profound humility and trust. All methods of the teacher are good which love prompts, and which subserve the ends of love. "Faith always finds encouragement and obtains reward" with Christ. To take the remark of Jesus in ver. 27 as seriously meant, would be contrary to his spirit. It is the echo of the harsh feeling of the bigoted Jew, and really illustrates by implicit contrast the tenderness and benignity of Christ.—J.

Vers. 31—37.—The deaf and dumb. I. THE GREAT PRIVATION OF SUCH A SUFFERER. Deafness cuts the person off from society more than blindness. He is not blessed by that music which expresses the soul of things. He cannot hear that sound of the human voice, which is the most delicious of all music. One sense needs the sisterly help of another. Sight tantalizes without hearing. To be full of thought and feeling, yet not to be able to speak,—than this sense of restraint upon the noblest part of our nature, nothing may seem more hard.

II. THE CURE IS SYMBOLIC OF THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S MISSION. 1. *The mode of the cure.* The symbolic action was appropriate. Ordinary language could not be understood by the sufferer. Jesus employs gesture instead. There are special institutions for teaching the deaf and dumb. Consider how holy a work it is, and how consecrated by his example. The up-looking denoted internal prayer. So let prayer be the soul of all our action on others and for others (ch. vi. 41; John xi. 41; xvii. 1). 2. *The cure itself as symbolic.* Christ's love entering the heart enlarges the intelligence, opens the world of music and harmony. As love opens the gate into a sphere of unearthly beauty to the lover, so to the soul captivated by the love of God all things have become new. There is a "sacred silence, offspring of the deeper heart;" and dumbness has its sanctity, for here is "the finger of God." But sacred is the eloquence of the tongue, set free by the larger life of mind and heart. God made us for utterance, as he made the streams to flow.—J.

Vers. 1—23.—The tradition of men in competition with the commandments of God. Pharisees and scribes of Jerusalem had detected some of the disciples of Jesus eating bread "with defiled, that is, with unwashed, hands." "Holding the tradition of the elders" with great tenacity themselves, they demand of the new Teacher a reason for

his disciples' departure from the old paths. It was a favourable opportunity for exposing the error of substituting human for Divine precepts, and for placing the external in its right relation to the internal and spiritual. Christ here appears as the authoritative Interpreter of the Divine commands; and, as a true Teacher, discriminating between the "commandment of God" and "the tradition of men." Of old time it was well said, "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart." Here the men who "sit on Moses' seat," alike in what they "bid" and in what they "do," lay great stress on the "washings of cups, and pots, and brassen vessels," and of hands. Truly great matters! But the searching eye Divine discerns the hidden "heart" that is "far from" God, and whose many evils send forth a thick stream of pollution in unholy practices, defiling not merely the hands but the whole life. Jesus rebuts their accusation against his disciples, first by a justly merited rebuke, and then by readjusting the relative authority of the commandment of God and the tradition of men, which, in the practice of these accusers, through their selfish, grasping covetousness, had been so greatly distorted. He teaches once and for ever that no commandment of men, no tradition of elders, must be allowed to make "void the Word of God." Thus Jesus, who is so often erroneously spoken of as despising "mere commands," redeems the very "word," and pays his utmost tribute to the letter of the command. In the conflict between the Church and the sacred relationships of common life, to the latter must be assigned the pre-eminence. The necessities of the temple, of its services or its servants, must not be met at the expense of filial faithfulness. The sin of the Pharisees and scribes was—

I. A GROSS PERVERSION OF THE RELATIVE CLAIMS OF THE PARENT AND THE CHURCH.

II. A WICKED INTERFERENCE WITH THE FIRST COMMANDMENT WITH PROMISE.

III. A CRUEL UNDERMINING OF FILIAL AFFECTION AND FIDELITY, AND AS CRUEL AN EXPOSURE OF THE AGED AND ENFEEBLED PARENTS TO A FALSELY JUSTIFIED NEGLECT. And it was—

IV. AN UNWARRANTED USURPATION OF AUTHORITY TO WEAKEN THE OBLIGATION OF A DIVINE LAW.

Christ's words, whilst correcting these errors, (1) traced the tradition to its true source—"your tradition, which ye have delivered;" (2) reduced it to its proper place of inferiority; and (3) exalted the Divine command, "Honour thy father and thy mother," to its unassailable supremacy. So he prepares the way for a correction of the "many such like things" which were done by these "hypocrites," who taught "as their doctrines the precepts of men."—G.

Vers. 14—23.—The real and the imaginary defilement. The question of "the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes which had come from Jerusalem," yet remains to be answered, Jesus having turned aside to weaken the force of "the tradition of men." The answer is given in the ears of "the multitude." It is simple. "There is nothing from without the man that can defile him:" defilement is of that which proceeds "from within out of the heart of man." The man's heart is the fountain of evil; it is his heart, not his hands, that needs washing. No wonder that "the Pharisees were offended, when they heard this saying." Then, having "entered into the house from the multitude," the disciples "asked of him" what is to them as yet "the parable;" for so are they "without understanding also." In few words he distinguishes the true nature and source of defilement from the untrue, leaving for all time these lessons hidden in his words—

I. ALL POLLUTION IS MORAL POLLUTION. From this all mere ceremonial defilement must be distinguished. Such uncleanness is not moral impurity, nor is ceremonial correctness to be regarded as the testimony of moral purity. The stainless externalist may harbour "within" all "evil things." The perversion of a wise teaching on the necessity for personal cleanliness and of instructive ceremonials had led to the foolish supposition that a touch of the dead, or the diseased, or the decaying matter, conveyed moral impurity. This is once for all contradicted. Whatsoever is "without the man" conveys not the defilement. It is a moral condition. The heart can defile all things. As that which is from without the man cannot defile, so let it be known "there is nothing from without the man that going into him can" cleanse "him."

II. THE SOURCE OF ALL IMPURITY IS NOT IN GOD'S WORKS, BUT IN MAN'S HEART. "All these evil things proceed from within." Thus Jesus, with his just judgment, traces evil to its hidden source. The heart, not the flesh, is the seat of defilement. This is the fountain which can corrupt God's good and pure gifts. How marked a contrast does he make between a possible ceremonial uncleanness—a very trifle at most (as to moral uncleanness it is *nil*)—and the greatness, the multiplicity, and the foulness of the "evil things which proceed from within"! Material things cannot in themselves convey moral impurity. Even the excess in the use of the food, which destroys life, comes from within. That the good things of God may be turned into occasions of evil all know, but it is only the heart that can so turn them. Whatsoever is "without the man cannot defile him, because it goeth merely into his body, not into his heart;" and the heart, not the body, is "the man," the true man, the very man.

III. FROM THE THRALDOM OF A FALSE CEREMONIALISM CHRIST REDEEMS HIS DISCIPLES, "MAKING ALL MEATS CLEAN." How needful not only to say what is sin, but to say also what is not sin! From many a yoke which the fathers were not able to bear Christ sets his people free! From child's play to serious work he calls them. From a mere adjustment of articles of dress and of furniture; from punctilios of ritual observance having in themselves no moral significance, and liable to withdraw men from great works and great truths, he turns them aside. He exposes the true evilness in the long catalogue of "evil things" of which the heart, not the flesh, is capable; and he, without many words of exhortation, directs men to seek the cleansing of their unholly hearts, that their lives, their whole man, may be clean also.—G.

Ver. 24-30.—*The Syro-phœnician woman.* Now, in prudence, not in fear, Jesus withdraws from the districts under Herod's jurisdiction, where he had created sufficient excitement to expose him to hindrance both by friends and foes. He fain would hide himself in secret. "He entered into a house, and would have no man know it;" but it was unavailing—"he could not be hid." One at least sought him out with an eager intrusiveness which was only justified by the greatness and pressing nature of her need—"a little daughter grievously vexed with a devil"—and the brilliancy of her faith, which, while it wrought as great good for her home, secured so high commendation from her Lord. On that faith our eye must be fixed.

I. The DEMAND for faith on the part of the stranger was very great. Not one of "the children," but one of "the dogs," she had not been trained in the hope of Israel; though, living in neighbourly relation with the Jews, she was not wholly uninformed. Yet the very name given to the "Lord," of whom "mercy" is sought—"thou Son of David"—was an excluding term for her who could claim no relationship to the sacred family. She belonged not to the house; she was a village dog. Truly it needed great faith on her part to burst through the barriers and ask for "the children's bread." But she shared the common humanity; she had heard of the many healings—even "as many as touched but the border of his garment," though no appeal were made; and the keen eye of need and maternal anxiety saw the largeness of the compassion of him who had not yet denied any.

II. Strangely, however, that faith is TESTED by absolute silence, by apparent indifference. "He answered her not a word." The disregarded prayer, even though she "besought him" to help her, returned to chill the heart of hope and faith. Her continued appeal, "she crieth after us," engages the intercession of the disciples, who, evidently for their own relief, add their beseeching to hers. Still the appeal is unavailing, and on high and unassailable grounds, with which no personal consideration mingles. "I was not sent" to the heathen. But the struggling faith braves difficulties, and casts this mountain into the sea. Prostrate at his feet she falls with the plea, soon to be effectual, "Lord, help me." Yet even this appeal fails to conquer. He who always acts according to what is right and just declares, "It is not meet"—it is contrary to all propriety and right—"to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs."

III. The parabolic or figurative argument has its weak place, which quick-sighted faith, untiring and unfainting, detects and thereby secures its TRIUMPH. "'Yea, Lord,' Yea, it is true; they are the children; yea, I am but a dog; truly it is not right to give the children's bread to dogs; yet in every house the dog is not wholly forgotten." The argument has its (intended) flaw, for God cares for dogs; and from every well-supplied

table something goes to them. Give me that—"the crumbs that fall." Give me "the children's crumbs;" what they need not, what they despise, what I may have without robbing them.

IV. It is enough; the patient, triumphant faith at length finds its REWARD. It shall be written for future generations of needy ones to learn how to succeed in presence of difficulties and hindrances and impossibilities. The Lord's honour is upon thee. "Great is thy faith." And more, thy suit is gained, thy word is mighty. For "this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter." It was even so. Let every suffering one, even though outcast from the holy, happy community, and every one within that community, learn from this little story that if men have faith as a grain of mustard seed, it shall be even as they will. And let every timid, unbelieving child bend lowly before this "dog," and learn the power of living, hopeful, resolute faith.—G.

Vers. 31—37.—*The healing of the deaf and dumb man.* Another case of healing, the record of which is peculiar to St. Mark, throws into prominence both the pitifulness of men and the power of the Lord. It is that of one unable to speak for himself, and unable to hear of the many wonderful works which are being done around. "They bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to lay his hand upon him." Ah, they have gained faith in the power of that hand. Jesus "took him aside from the multitude privately." Thus the man, at least, would know the work was the work of Jesus only. Then, for reasons that are not assigned, possibly as signs to him who could not hear, he "put his fingers into his ears, . . . spat, . . . touched his tongue," and looked "up to heaven," and "sighed" and spake, and "saith"—saith "to him" the first word he should hear, "Ephphatha!" Then "his ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain." Thus is presented to us a *typical example of the redemption of the disorganized life.*

I. One of the disorganizing effects of evil is that it closes the ear. It stops the avenues to the soul by which the word of truth and love may enter. The wicked man is deaf to the appeals of righteousness. Its gentle, winning tones fall unheeded on the inattentive, unmoved heart, which is as insensible to them as is a stone. How great is the injury thus inflicted! The man is shut out from the elevating, ennobling, the satisfying, sanctifying influence of truth. The words which minister grace to the hearers can convey none of their treasures to his heart; the way is not open. The human or Divine voice, so rich in its ministries to the ignorant, to the inquirer, to the hungry, is powerless here. The corrections of wisdom, the lofty motive, the noble aim, the calming, comforting voice of truth, guiding and blessing wherever it is heard, has no power here. All is lost. Not more is he to be pitied who, by physical infirmity, hears not the voice of friends, the songs of birds, the harmonies of sweet sounds. Sin robs the life of its truest, its highest enrichment. Christ's greatest ministries to the world were by his lips. Though the words were of earth, they were vessels holding heavenly treasure. But the deaf hear them not. So truly is a state of sinfulness typified in deafness.

II. But sin equally impedes the free and profitable service of the life of its victim. It closes his mouth. The mouth, which may be a fountain of wisdom, if unsealed. The life, which might be a spring of blessing to many, is as a dry and parched land, or as a well having no water. That beneficent ordination by which one life—even every life—is designed to be a source of blessing to every other, is, by evil, frustrated; and it becomes, instead, a cause of injury.

III. It is here Christ appears to bless the race by opening the eyes of the blind, by unstopping the ears of the deaf, by loosing the tongue of the dumb. His holy work stands over against the evil of sin. He unstops the deaf ear. Awakening the attention of the sleeper, he gives to the receiving soul the words of eternal life. His heavenly teaching renews, exalts, ennobles. The ignorant one becomes wise in his school. His truth raises the beggar from the dunghill. Righteousness puts the soul *en rapport* with all that is good, and beautiful, and wise, and holy. It makes a man to be at one with all the kingdom of God, with all truth and all life.

IV. But the redeemed life becomes a source of blessing to others—a fountain of living waters. The unsealed lips speak forth the heavenly wisdom. The psalm of praise, the song of thanksgiving, the word of truth, of peace, and of blessing, and the activities of

the good life, are all serviceable. The life now becomes an active power for good. Each, when he has "turned again," is able to strengthen his brethren. The first effect of the eviction of evil from the life is that the eyes are opened, that all that surrounds may enter to enrich the life. The second effect is, the lips are opened, the life becomes a centre of useful influence. It is a new acquisition to the world, a new joy. So from without flows into the redeemed life all that is calculated to minister to it, to nourish, to purify, to exalt, to gladden and perfect it; while back again from the nourished, purified, and gladdened life, new sentiments, new emotions, new aims, and new efforts proceed. The effect of which reciprocal influence is that each becomes a point of light, a form of loveliness; each a stream of holy, useful influence, refreshing this weary desert and making it glad. Truly, of him who "maketh even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak," it may be said, "He hath done all things well." It is no less well said, "And they glorified the God of Israel."—G.

Vers. 1—23. Parallel passage: Matt. xv. 1—20.—*Exposure of Pharisaism: its errors and evils.* I. DOCTRINE OF DEFILEMENT. 1. *Contents of this chapter.* This chapter contains three principal sections. The first section treats of *defilement*; the second gives an account of a *demon* being expelled from the daughter of a Syro-phenician woman; and the third narrates the cure of a *deaf* mute. The first section, again, contains the following:—The charge of defilement which the Pharisees preferred against the disciples; the evangelist's digression for the purpose of explaining to his Gentile readers the Jewish notions and usages in this matter; Christ's applying to the Jews of his day a description of their fathers by Isaiah; the reason of this application in the displacement by them of God's Law to make room for the traditional teachings of man; a much graver delinquency in nullifying the Law of God not merely with respect to ceremonial washings, but in regard to moral duties; a specific example of this in a glaring and most culpable neglect of filial obligation; our Lord's exposition, publicly in the presence of the assembled people and privately to the disciples, of the true nature of real, that is, moral defilement; and a reference to the distinction of clean and unclean in the matter of meats, which formed a main partition between Jews and Gentiles. The way was thus prepared for, and an easy transition made to, the subject of the second section, which narrates our Lord's only recorded visit to the Gentile world, and the miracle there wrought in the case of the Gentile maiden who was dispossessed under singularly interesting circumstances. The third section records a miracle which is only mentioned by St. Mark, and so peculiar to his Gospel. Our Lord, having just returned from the cities of Phenicia, was making his way through the midst of the region of the Ten Cities, when he cured the deaf mute or dumb man of Decapolis in a very remarkable manner, and by a method of external application not employed hitherto in the miracles wrought by our Lord.

2. *Linguistic peculiarities in the first section.* (1) The first peculiarity of the kind indicated is the use of the Greek word *πυγμή*, which is a *hapax legomenon*, and qualifies the verb "wash." In our English version it is translated (a) *oft*, and in the margin (b) *diligently*, which is adopted in the Revised Version. The former is supported by the Vulgate, which has *crebro*, and depends on the analogy of similar but not really related words, such as *πυκνῇ* or *πυκνῶς*; while the marginal rendering has the support of the Peshito Syriac *btloith*. Some of the older interpreters understand it as (c) a measure of length, and so Euthymius has *μέχρι τοῦ ἄγκυρος*, "as far as the elbow;" and Theophylact similarly, adding that it is the space from the elbow to the knuckles; the water poured out into the hollow of the hand would thus, by the elevation of the same, flow down to the elbow. The more natural explanation seems to be that which takes it (d) in the primary signification of the word, which is clenched hand or fist; not in the sense of the closed hand being raised so as to allow the water to flow down to the elbow; nor yet in the sense of rubbing the closed hand or fist with the hollow of the other hand, which, as Fritzsche suggests, would require the words to be *τῇ παλαμῇ νίφονται τὴν πυγμήν*; but in the sense of washing the hand with the fist, that is, by rubbing one hand with the other closed or clenched or with the fist, in the sense of *vigorously*. This explanation, which corresponds with that of Beza, amounts to the idea of diligence conveyed by the Syriac. This verb *νίπτω*, it may be observed in passing, generally refers to "washing the hands or feet," as *πλύνω* signifies to "wash clothes," and

λοῦε to "wash," usually the body, and therefore in the middle voice "to bathe." (2) Again, in ver. 4, a different kind of washing must be meant by *βαπτίζονται*. Olshausen and others refer the washing which it implies, not to the Pharisees themselves, but to the articles of food bought in, and brought from, market; and explain the middle voice consistently with its usual meaning, that is to say, in the signification of washing for themselves. This rendering scarcely deserves the serious consideration given to it, and is to be rejected unhesitatingly. It must, as we think, refer to the men themselves. The washing of ver. 3 is partial, only including the hands; it was the ordinary custom with the Jews of that day before partaking of food; but in case they had been to the market or bazaar, and had come into contact with the crowd that resorted thither, it was scarcely possible to escape defilement of some kind in mixing with that motley multitude, and therefore a more general washing, extending to the whole body, became a ceremonial necessity. The other reading (*βαπτίζονται*), denoting "to sprinkle" or "cleanse by sprinkling," is properly regarded as a gloss; the word *βαπτίζονται*, in the absence of regimen, is quite unrestricted as to mode, signifying "wash themselves," as it is rendered in the Revised Version. There is (3) a slight diversity about the connection of the words *ἀπὸ ἀγορᾶς*, which are joined by Krebs and Kuinoel to *ἐσθίουσιν*, in the sense of eating of things bought in the market, like the construction which occurs in ver. 28 of this same chapter, where the dogs are said to eat of the crumbs (*ἐσθίει ἀπὸ τῶν ψυχλῶν*); while *ἀγορὰ* is admitted to have in the classics the signification of provisions bought in the market, as in the phrase *ἀγορὰν παραίχον*. This, however, appears a straining both of the sense and construction, the plain rendering being "after market," or, as the English has it, "when they came from the market;" thus *ἀπὸ δέλτου* means "after supper."

3. *Additional baptisms.* These washings, which the Pharisees and indeed all the Jews practised, were not confined to their hands or whole persons; but, besides such personal ablutions, there were baptism of cups and pots, of brazen vessels, and of couches. Of these domestic utensils the first are named from the use to which they are applied, namely, for drinking, as is expressed by its root; the second, corresponding to the Roman *sextarius*, from which, and not from *ξέω*, to polish, is the word derived, are named from their size, and contain a pint, or sixth part of a congius (somewhere about a gallon); the third are called from the material copper of which they are made; the fourth get their name like the first, from their use, to wit, of reclining on, either for the purpose of sleep or at meals.

4. *The origin of these washings.* Several chapters of Leviticus (xii.—xv.) contain a tolerably full account of the ablutions enjoined in the Law, and employed for Levitical purifications. These purifications were resorted to for the purpose of ceremonial cleansing. They had generally respect to certain states or conditions of the body, symbolical of the defiling nature of sin. In some of these cases we read that the person to be cleansed "shall wash his clothes, bathe his flesh in running water, and shall be clean." But Pharisaism extended these washings far beyond the limits of the Law—applied them to cases neither contemplated by, nor comprehended in, the Law, and multiplied them to an absurd amount. Persons, before engaging in the commonest acts of domestic or social life, were compelled to a strict observance of such washings; nay, the very articles of household furniture, including those here enumerated, had to be subjected to them. God had, for good and wise purposes, instituted certain temporary means of ceremonial cleansing; but man perverts and pollutes, or, when he does not pollute, he perverts the wisest means to the worst ends. The perversions in the case before us, besides being excessively burdensome and extremely inconvenient from their multiplicity, were perfectly contemptible from their very puerility and triviality, and positively sinful from the seemingly magical efficacy with which they invested mere mechanical operations.

5. *Ceremonialism.* Ceremonies of human invention, especially when multiplied and perverted from their legitimate or appointed use, like the ablutions referred to, instead of being helps, become hindrances to devotion. They promote irreligion at the same time that they foster pride. Their tendency is to put outward purifying in the place of inward purity, to substitute external cleansing for internal cleanness, to prefer clean hands to a clean heart, and to rest in "the righteousness which is of the Law" instead of "the righteousness which is of God by faith." True religion, under whatever

dispensation, begins with the heart. Thus the psalmist prays so beautifully, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." The promise here is limited to such, as when it is said, "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart;" the prospect hereafter is for them, and for them alone; for it is only "the pure in heart" that shall "see God." No amount of outward observances or ceremonial ablutions could constitute real religion or supply its place, nor entitle the person that performed them to the privileges of a true child of God. The apostle insists on this when he says, "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

6. *Tradition.* Tradition in general is that which is handed down from father to son, or from one generation to another. The word is sometimes used in a good sense, and signifies instructions, whether relating to doctrine or duty, faith or practice, and whether the delivery be oral or written; but, and this is the main thing, consisting of truths immediately delivered by inspired men. Such is its signification in 1 Cor. xi. 2, where the apostle commands or exhorts the Corinthians to "hold fast the traditions, even as I delivered them to you;" also in 2 Thess. ii. 15, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle;" and again in the same Epistle (iii. 6), "Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." But it has another sense also in Scripture, and is employed to denote what is merely human and untrustworthy, as when St. Paul speaks of himself as he was in his original sinful, unconverted state, and says, "I profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers;" and again, when he warns the Colossians, saying, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." It is in this latter sense that it is used in ver. 6 of the present chapter, when "the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders?" The Jewish theory of tradition was that, along with the written Law, Moses received at Sinai a second or oral law, and that this latter law was handed down through succeeding generations. This law, consisting of traditional interpretations and gradual additions, was at length embodied in the text of the Talmud, called "Mishna," or "second law." This oral law held a higher rank, and was more highly esteemed than the written Law. It not only supplemented the written Law by large additions, but was employed as the key to its interpretation. Thus in the end it was used in instances innumerable to supplant, or supersede, or set aside, the written Law at pleasure. We do not despise tradition in the proper and legitimate sense which, as we have seen, the word sometimes has, nor in its present ordinary sense of something handed down—ordinance or ceremony—provided it be agreeable to the Divine Word; but we must not set up tradition side by side with the written Word of God, nor bring God's Word into conformity with tradition; on the contrary, whenever God's Word and human tradition clash, the latter must be corrected by the former. One example of this kind we have in relation to the Apostle John, about whom the saying went abroad that he should not die. Jesus had said, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" This was in the first instance misinterpreted, then the misinterpretation spread from mouth to mouth as a regular tradition, till the apostle himself felt called upon to correct it by the specific statement, "Yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."

7. *Isaiah's prediction as applicable to the Pharisees as to their fathers.* The statement of Isaiah, though not in the strict and specific sense a prediction concerning our Lord's contemporaries, was a description so all-embracing and so pregnant with meaning, that it exhibited with striking exactness the chief features of their religious life, or rather of their irreligious, soulless formality. Isaiah foretold it (*προεφίτησεν*, aorist) in the past, but it stands written from then till now, and so our Lord, in this case, uses the perfect (*γέγραπται*). What was said then, so long before, was equally true in the Saviour's day; it was as true of the children, or remote descendants, as of their ancestors, as though the traits of character referred to had become stereotyped.

(1) He charged them with hypocritical lip-service, saying, as though with withering scorn, "Ye hypocrites, ye honour me with lip-service, but without sincere heart-worship!" (2) with vanity or empty form in worshipping according to the commandments which human tradition taught; and (3) our Lord, in stating the ground of the application which he makes of the prophet's words, brings home the charge, asserting that by those human precepts they displaced the commandments of God; and then (4) he backs his assertion by an example of most glaring and flagrant criminality as the natural result of such Pharisaic teaching.

8. *Practical remarks on the preceding.* We cannot fail to notice (1) the depth of meaning in the Divine Word; of this characteristic of Scripture we have here a notable illustration. What Isaiah spoke in his moral portraiture of his contemporaries, applied to their children's children many centuries after, as accurately and as exactly as if he had had the latter solely in view, or rather as if the distant ancestors and the remote posterity both sat together before this great spiritual limner. Such apt and felicitous delineation was not the result of human intuition or prophetic sagacity, but of Divine inspiration; it was the Spirit that gave the prophet such foresight, and thus testified the truth beforehand. The word "hypocrite" (2) originally meant one who answered in a dramatic dialogue, and thus an actor; and further, one who wore a mask as actors did. It denotes one who assumes a character which does not really belong to him, or acts a part that is unreal, or feigns virtues not possessed. The persons to whom the word is here applied approached God with their lips, while their heart was far distant from (παρὼν ἀπέχει, "holds far aloof from") him. They were acting the part of true worshippers, but were not so in reality; they were wearing a mask of profession, which they put on to conceal their real character. They pretended to be honouring God, but the honour which they gave him did not proceed from the heart; it was only in outward seeming, or for external show. This worship (3) was confined to the utterances of their lips as the main instrument employed in such worship; but the understanding and its faculties, the heart and its affections, were not engaged, and took no part in it. It was hollow-hearted and false-hearted; it was vain (μάτην, in vain, a word which may come from μάω, to seek but without finding). It was meant as worship, no doubt, but it was fruitless, being worship that God could not accept. The vanity (4) of this worship, however, did not arise so much from the manner of it—heartless as that was, and spiritless as it was—but from the matter of it. All worship presumes certain doctrines and duties, and proceeds in accordance with these. Every time we open our lips in praise or prayer, or other act of worship, doctrines or duties of some sort are involved, implied, or referred to. But the doctrines which these Pharisaic formalists taught were the commandments of men; they had no higher source and no better origin. If we would worship God aright, we must worship according to the way and means which God himself has prescribed; if we teach acceptably, we must teach the doctrines which God directs. Not so the Pharisees: their doctrines were human commandments; their teaching, therefore, was often false, always fallible, often puerile, and not unfrequently pernicious. But worse still, their teachings were not merely negative, in so far as they did not teach what God commanded, but only what men invented; they were positively subversive of the commandment of God in *any given case*, and hence the word here is singular (ἐντολήν); as our Lord himself affirms, when in ver. 8 he states the ground on which he applies to the Pharisees of his time the words spoken by Isaiah in relation to their ancestors. Ye give up or *let go* the commandment of God, but *hold fast* the tradition of men in the matter of ceremonial washings, and of many other things of like kind. Not only so; ye *set aside* the commandment of God (not *by*, as in the Authorized Version, but) *for the sake of* your tradition (διὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν, St. Matthew), or, as St. Mark more fully expresses it, "in order that ye may keep your own tradition." Thus there is a climax; for, first, they *let go* or *dismiss* the commandment of God, while they hold with obstinate tenacity human tradition; then, secondly, they *set aside* or *displace*, putting something else in its room, or reject with something akin to contempt, the commandment of God; from omission they proceeded to commission as usual, and all this in order to *guard*, observe, or maintain their own tradition. Isaiah had finely (καλῶς) described them beforehand, and now they finely (καλῶς, the same word, but used ironically in this second instance, and not with the meaning of "entirely") act up to that description.

9. *Moral obligation set aside through Pharisaism.* Our Lord proceeds to expose the practical and pernicious effect of Pharisaic traditionalism in the domain of ethics. He had shown the hollowness of its teaching in cases of ceremonial cleansings; but he now advances from the ceremonial to the moral. For this purpose he selects the fifth commandment, and proves that the antagonism between the written Law, or Law of God, and the oral, or human law, in respect to this commandment, is complete. He quotes the prescriptive part of the commandment, and omits the promissory as not required by the object he has in view; instead of the promissory clause attached to obedience, he substitutes the punitive sentence pronounced on the person guilty of a breach of the commandment in question. "Moses said"—and here it will be observed that the commandment of God, who spake by Moses, is identified with the commandment of his inspired servant, so that what was really said by God is here attributed by our Lord to his servant Moses—"Honour thy father and thy mother." These words were graven by the finger of the Almighty on the stone tablet at Sinai, and the precept thus solemnly delivered at first was enforced by the awfully severe sanction which follows:—"Whoso curseth"—that is, speaketh ill of or revileth—"father or mother, let him die the death." (1) In the "precept" the possessive pronoun and article are used with both words, "father" and "mother," as if to individualize, and point out specifically to every reader or hearer of the Law, the duty as individual and personal; but, in the penalty clause, the pronoun and article, though expressed both in the original Hebrew and Septuagint Version, are omitted in the record of both evangelists, as if to generalize or treat as a class, and present the duty in the abstract, thus denoting unfaithfulness to such a relationship—such a sacred object of affection as a father and a mother. The omission of the article by itself draws attention to the quality, character, or nature, rather than the substance, of the thing thus spoken of. (2) The original Hebrew expression is a peculiar idiom of that language, implying intensity by means of an infinitive mood joined to the finite verb of the same signification, and denoting, "Let him be surely put to death"—literally, "dying, let him be put to death." The Septuagint Version has two ways of expressing this Hebrew idiom, either by the verb and cognate noun in the dative, or by the verb and its participle; the former is the mode not exactly adopted, but only approximated in this instance, with merely an insignificant variation, by the evangelist, namely, "Let him end with death." But (3) the words "he shall be free" of the common version are supplied in order to make out the sense. If the reading of the received text, which begins the next verse with *καί*, be retained, the verse before us may be regarded (a) as an instance of the figure *aposiopesis*, by which our Lord, as if with inexpressible indignation at the thought of conduct so unnatural and reprehensible, breaks off without completing the sentence; while the supplied words of the English version express the acquittal conceded in the case by Pharisaic casuistry. Another way (b) of evading the difficulty was suggested by Fritzsche, who supplies here the closing words of ver. 10 with a negative—that is, *μή θανάτῳ τελευτῆται*—so that this verse would read as follows:—"But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, *let him not die the death.*" The Revised Version, (c) however, cuts the knot by adopting the reading which excludes *καί* from the beginning of ver. 12; thus, "But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is Corban, that is to say, Given to God; ye no longer suffer him to do aught for his father or his mother."

10. *Further development of our Lord's retort.* The word "corban" meant anything brought near to the altar or to the God of the altar for presentation, and applied, like the cognate verb *hikrib*, to bring near, to any offerings, whether bloody or unbloody, animal or vegetable. The evangelist, as is his custom, explains it by a Greek word denoting a gift in general, but more particularly, according both to Homeric and Hellenistic usage, a gift to God, or a votive offering. It is thus a correct equivalent of the word which the evangelist explains by it. When, then, a Jewish child wished to discard, and entirely free himself from, filial obligation, he had only to pronounce this mystic word of potent meaning, and the traditional law of Pharisaism gave him a full release. Whenever a man said of any part of his property or of his whole possessions, "It is Corban," that is, "given to God," he was bound by his vow, and the property was devoted to the service or support of the altar or temple or national religion; it was

made over for religious purposes, though the time of fulfilling such vow was left to his own option, and so its fulfilment became discretionary, or was evaded. To revile or curse father or mother was surely bad enough and wicked enough; but to refuse to supply the wants of a parent when reduced to poverty, or to support a parent in old age and when needing such support, or to withhold from an indigent parent the necessities of life, on the plea that the means or resources out of which such could be supplied were devoted to religious uses, was a refinement of unnatural and inhuman wickedness almost incapable of being expressed in words. And thus, as the next verse informs us, they suffered him no longer to do anything for his parents, even if he would; or, if he would not, they suffered him to have his way, conniving at his sin and overlooking his shame, nay, putting words into his mouth to enable him to perpetrate in the name of religion such abominable villainy. If, from a spirit of greedy avarice, or miserable meanness, or detestable stinginess; or in a fit of spiteful passion; or under the influence of superstition, a wicked Jew pleased to say to either parent suffering from disease, or labouring under age and poverty, "That whereby I might have helped, or relieved, or in any way benefited you, is devoted to the service of God and religion, and cannot now be withdrawn," the oral law of the Pharisee granted full liberty to do so, taught him its formula for that very purpose, and saved his conscience that he might withal feel at ease. Now, to those censorious Pharisees who watched our Lord and his disciples with such lynx-eyed vigilance and malign intent, and who had seen, not all the disciples, but some of them, partaking, not of a regular repast, but eating a morsel of bread with hands common, that is, in the ordinary or general state—clean, it may be, but not ritually cleansed—our Lord may be supposed to say, Ye blame my hungry disciples for snatching the fragment of a hurried meal without ceremonial ablution, and censure them for neglecting a silly ceremony enjoined no doubt, by your traditional law, which is only of human origin, and, in such a case as that just referred to, of most nefarious tendency; but ye teach your disciples to violate, not a trivial ceremonial observance for which only human authority can be pleaded, and from which no benefit can be derived, but a moral duty, based on closest human relationship, written by God's own finger, recorded in his written law, and enforced by the most solemn sanction! Is not this to establish man's law and set aside God's Law; to adhere punctiliously to the miserable tradition of miserable or wicked men, but to invalidate and even abrogate the Law of an infinitely pure and holy God—a Law, too, like its Author, holy and just and good! To wash the hands before a regular meal, or any meal, may be proper enough as a custom, or for cleanliness, or as a matter of delicacy, yet can never be exalted into a religious act or rite; but to trifle with or trample underfoot the law of natural affection, of filial piety, of common humanity—a law specially honoured with a most gracious promise, and sternly hedged in with the severest sanction—must bring down the vengeance of Heaven on the guilty head of its transgressor. Thus our Lord left them to look at this picture and on that.

II. DISTINCTION BETWEEN CLEAN AND UNCLEAN. 1. *Statement of a principle.* After our Lord had put to silence and covered with confusion these intermeddling, fault-finding, censorious, and cavilling Pharisees, he proceeds to state a great and fundamental principle, which covered the whole ground and went to the very root of the matter. Before doing so, he requests the particular attention of the multitude. Whether they had withdrawn to a respectful distance during our Lord's interview with the Pharisees and triumphant answer to their objection, or whether, from indifference to their obtrusive questionings the malevolent intention of which was obvious, they had sunk into a state of listless inattention, does not appear. They required, from whatever cause, to have their attention stimulated. For this purpose he calls on all and each, not only to listen attentively, but to reflect, with intelligence wide awake and active, on the great principle he is about to enunciate. Having thus gained their intelligent attention and roused their powers of reflection, he states the important distinction that "there is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man." After making this statement, he again appeals to them to give it their careful consideration.

2. *Important distinction.* Our Lord, in the principle stated, distinguishes between the physical and spiritual natures of man, as also between ceremonial and moral defilements; between positive regulations and moral requirements; and thus between pre-

cepts given for a particular purpose and obligations for a limited time, and those laws that were unvarying in their nature and perpetual in their obligation. The principle in question our Lord propounds in the form of an antithetic paradox. The first part of it seemed to collide with the distinction between meats clean and unclean, which God himself had appointed and minutely specified; and, if taken in a ceremonial sense, so it did; but understood morally, as our Lord had intended, it pointed not obscurely to the purpose for which such distinctions had been instituted. That purpose was temporary in its duration, and for the segregation of the chosen people from the mass of mankind, as well as for the symbolic intimation of the difference that should exist between the holiness to which the people of God were called, and the heathenism that prevailed around. Our Lord meant to correct an injurious error under which the people of the Jews in general then laboured. He had rebuked their superstitious punctiliousness about certain ceremonial washings, and their sinful regardlessness of moral obligations. This naturally leads him to expose the grave mistake they made when they foolishly supposed that meats of themselves exercised any moral efficacy or possessed any moral potency. That they defiled ceremonially, and exposed to disabilities of a ceremonial kind and entailing purification, was not doubted; but that they had any power of themselves either to cleanse or purify is here most positively denied. The cause of defilement was man's fallen nature; the source of it was within; the seat of it was the heart; the stagnant pool from which such polluted waters issued was deep down in the very depths of his being. Thence proceeded defilements of speech through the mouth, defilements of work in the conduct, defilements of thoughts in the character and conversation. The disciples had shared the errors and prejudices of their race to a very large extent, and not understanding the strange paradoxical statement, sought an explanation in private. After a gentle reprimand for their dulness of apprehension, they were favoured by their Master with a full explanation.

3. *Moral impurity.* The belly is the stomach and viscera, or organs of digestion generally; the heart is used for both the intellect and affections—the whole soul. These are totally distinct; what enters the former does not and cannot reach the latter. There is no connection between these parts of man's nature, and no compatibility between the objects that affect them. Meats only enter the stomach and intestines, and minister to man's life and strength; even the exclusion of their refuse tends to purification rather than defilement. But the things that do defile proceed out of the heart; and they are *sins* against God's Law, or *dispositions* that incline to those sins, and *incentives* that prompt to them. Those *sins* are against the commandments in the so-called second table of the Law. According to a rough classification that has been made, some are sins against the sixth commandment, as murders, wickedness, and an evil eye; some against the seventh, as fornication, adultery, and lasciviousness; some against the eighth, as theft and deceit; some against the ninth, as blasphemies, or evil-speaking, and false witness (in St. Matthew's enumeration); and some against the tenth, as covetousness, or, literally, "reachings after more." But of the evil dispositions that lead to overt acts of sine, the chief place is occupied by evil thoughts, whether the reference is to evil thoughts in general, or to such vicious reasonings (*διαλογισμοί*) as those in which the Pharisees were accustomed to indulge. While such inward thoughts or reasonings are the *seminal principles* from which sinful actions proceed—the bitter roots from which they shoot up and grow—a *leading motive* to sin is specified: it is pride (*ὑπερηφανία*, a desire to appear above others), the wish for conspicuous elevation. In pride itself the predominant element is selfishness—that selfishness that prompts men to seek the pre-eminence in all things, and to prefer self to all other persons or interests, in contrariety to the scriptural precept which directs us "in honour to prefer one another." Pride implies that overbearing demeanour and haughtiness of carriage that make men look down on others, supposing themselves so much superior. Pride centres all in self, disregarding others' interests whenever they seem to stand in the way; at the same time proud persons, male or female, "sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their own drag." Pride is thus a most powerful motive to sin, to selfish indulgence, to self-aggrandizement, to supercilious speech in regard to others, and to self-interest, whatever form it may assume, and however much detriment may be done to the rights of others. Further, one *characteristic* of all sin, and a name frequently used in Scripture as synonymous with "sin," is "folly" (*ἀσπουδία*). This

senselessness denies God the glory that pertains to him, for "the fool has said in his heart, There is no God." While it thus robs God, it refuses to man his due. In the end it ruins the individual himself. "This their way is their folly." Oh, the folly of sin! The enumeration of the things which defile a man, as given here by St. Mark, is fuller than that given by St. Matthew. The latter mentions only seven; while St. Mark specifies thirteen. The cause of this additional number by the latter may be found in the vices that commonly prevailed among the Romans, for whom in the first instance St. Mark wrote, as compared with those to which the Jews, whom St. Matthew more especially kept in view in his Gospel, were addicted. A comparison also of the catalogue of crimes, which St. Paul, in writing to the Romans, gives at the close of his first chapter, will probably confirm the same conclusion, that the cause of the difference in the enumeration is connected with the different classes of sins to which persons belonging to these different nationalities were respectively addicted. Judaism at its worst, if this theory be correct, had greatly the advantage of paganism; so the lowest type of Christianity is superior to heathenism.—J. J. G.

Vers. 24—30. Parallel passage: Matt. xv. 21—28.—*Daughter of a Syro-phœnician woman healed.* I. OUR LORD'S WITHDRAWAL INTO THE REGION OF TYRE AND SIDON. Our Lord's retirement at this time into the region indicated was probably occasioned by a desire to avoid the further attention and inquiries of Herod, and perhaps his presence also there in his tetrarchy, which comprised Galilee and Peræa; while it may have been a symbolic intimation of the mercy in store for, and ere long to be extended to, Gentile lands; or it may have been simply for the purpose of seclusion and rest after a time of toil, and to escape from the cavils of scribes and Pharisees. The territory here described as "the borders of Tyre and Sidon" was not a district interjacent between Tyre and Sidon, as Erasmus understood it; nor yet the territory proper of Tyre and Sidon, as Fritzsche explained it; or the neighbourhood of the former city, as Alford took its meaning to be; but originally a tract of border-land or neutral ground which separated Palestine from Phœnicia, subsequently ceded by Solomon to the King of Tyre and incorporated with Phœnicia, yet still retaining its ancient name of border-land.

II. THE APPLICANT, AND HER WRETCHEDNESS. This applicant is called by St. Matthew a Canaanitish woman, and by St. Mark a Syro-phœnician. Phœnicia, in which the old and famous commercial cities of Tyre (from Tzor, "a rock," now *Sur*) and Sidon (from Tsidon, "fishery," now *Saida*, twenty miles further north) were situated, was part of ancient Cansan, and so inhabited by a remnant of that doomed race. But, as the Phœnicians were the great seafarers and colonizers of ancient times, they had sent out and founded many settlements. One of these was in Africa, and the colonists were distinguished by the appropriate name of Liby-phœnicians, from the parent stock which went by the name of Syro-phœnicians. Horace has the expression, "Uterque Pœnus serviat uni," and Juvenal twice employs the word "Syro-phœnix." It is probable that, while the coast-line retained the name Phœnicia, the more inland parts, where Syrian and Phœnician intermingled, got the name of Syro-phœnicia. But, while this woman was a Syro-phœnician by race, she was a Greek, that is, a Gentile; for the name Greek was used generally for all Gentiles, as distinguished from Jews, just as Frank is employed in the East for all Europeans; thus, we read in Rom. i. 16, "To the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Thus Greek was the same as Gentile, and the inhabitants of the world were distributed into Greeks and Jews. The applicant, then, in the narrative under consideration, belonged to a different nationality from the Jews, for she was a Syro-phœnician, and to a different religion, for she was a heathen. This poor woman, born and bred amid the darkness of heathenism, with little to sustain and comfort her in this world, and without hope for a better, had her full share of the miseries of mortal life. She appears from the narrative to have been a widow, as there is no mention or notice of her husband. If so—and we have no reason to doubt it—she had to bear the hardships and fight the battle of life alone, without the head of her little household, without the bread-winner of her family, and without a partner to share and so divide the current of her grief. She had a daughter, probably an only daughter, mayhap an only child; but that one daughter, that only child, instead of being a source of comfort or support to the widowed mother, was the cause of the great grief that pressed upon

and crushed her heart. That beloved child—that dear daughter, round whom alone, in the absence of other objects, the mother's affections were now all entwined—was an invalid, and an invalid whom no medical skill and no human power could relieve. It was not merely disease under which she laboured; if that had been all, however bad the case or severe the distemper, it might, even after medical appliances had proved unavailing, have exhausted itself, as is sometimes known to happen, or even the *vis medicatrix nature* might have effected a cure. But no, it was something worse, much worse, than any ordinary disease, however virulent; it was demoniac power—diabolical possession. The girl had “an unclean spirit,” and was “grievously vexed with a devil,” so that the case was taken out of the common category of diseases, and entirely hopeless. The poignancy of the mother's grief, the bitterness of her sorrow for a daughter so dear to her, and yet so hopelessly, helplessly afflicted, we can well imagine. Indeed, we seem to hear the echo of her wail in the pathetic cry for mercy: “Hava mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David!”

III. HER APPLICATION. What led her to think of Jesus at all? In the first instance, no doubt, it was her *misery* on account of her daughter's distressed condition. She had, we are persuaded, tried many means before this; she had left nothing undone, we are very sure; but all was in vain! Her wretchedness had found no relief; her misery remains without alleviation. She is now ready to do or to dare anything that may hold forth the slightest hope of relief. But while it was the feeling of misery in the first instance, and that strong maternal affection which the sufferings of her daughter roused into such active exercise, there was, besides, a *rumour* that had somehow reached her ears of the great Jewish Teacher, who was Prophet and Physician both in one. His fame had reached that distant heathen land. He wished, indeed, that no man should know of his journey thither or of his being there; he meant to travel *incognito*. But that he soon found to be impossible, for, as the evangelist expresses it, “he could not be hid;” there was that about him, conceal it as he might, which revealed his majesty and bespoke the greatness and dignity of his person. This Canaanitish woman has heard, moreover, that this powerful Healer has quitted the holy city, and left the Galilean hills, the flowery slopes, the glancing waters of the lovely lake; and that he is at present travelling in that remote north-west. Now she feels that her opportunity is come, that the time for trying another remedy has arrived, and that a Physician, greater than any she had ever applied to or heard of before, is now accessible. A load is lifted off her heart; her hopes are raised, and with buoyant spirit she sets out to where she heard he was. But she has not been long on the road till hope and fear begin to alternate. Had she not been buoyed up with similar hopes before, and yet those hopes had ended in disappointment? May it not be so again? May it not be so now? Still she feels that the object of all this solicitude can scarcely be worse, and may perhaps be better. At all events, she is determined to make the trial, if it should be the last. She has heard of multitudes of cures he has performed, of wonderful cures—cures of demoniacs as well as those afflicted with diseases; and so she plucks up heart anew, and again resumes her journey. Here were two strong motives impelling her to take the course she was doing—her sense of misery, and the reports about Jesus. And yet there was, we think, a third impelling power; for what suggested the resolution she came to in view of the wretchedness of her own and her daughter's condition, and on the ground of the reports that had reached her? What or who empowered her to make up her mind at once and form the resolution? What it was we are not told in so many words; it is not expressly stated, perhaps not even clearly implied; and yet such an impulse must have been given to her will. We speak of God putting this or that thought into the heart; and so we believe that it was God that opened her eyes to see her real condition, that opened her ears to hear the report—the good news about One who was mighty to heal and cure; that quickened the seed of thought thus sown in her soul, making it fructify, blossom, and bear fruit; in other words, that produced the resolution and prompted to action in carrying it out. It is exactly thus with the sinner; his eyes are opened to see his sin and consequent misery; his ears are opened to hear, and his heart to believe, the report of a Saviour; and he is persuaded and enabled to form the right resolution of applying at once to Jesus for pardon and peace—made willing, in fact, in the day of God's power.

IV. HER RESPECTFUL ADDRESS. The respectful mode of her address, and the earnest

petition which she prefers, are calculated to surprise and even astonish us. We must presuppose some knowledge of the Saviour, from whatever source it came. She had obtained in some way, and to some extent, knowledge of Jesus—how or whence we have not sufficient information to enable us to say. The terms of her address, when we consider her heathen antecedents and surroundings, are truly wonderful. "O Lord, thou Son of David"—these are marvellous words to come from heathen lips; "have mercy on me!" are words easily read between the lines of her misery, and easily accounted for by the sympathetic chord which her daughter's affliction had touched in her heart. The former words are not so readily accounted for. "O Lord," she said, and thus she acknowledged his power and his providence. She confesses her faith in his power as almighty, and in his providence as universal; she owns a providence which extends to, and is employed about, all the affairs of the world and men, and a power that regulates and controls all events. Nor are we sure that this term, as it was uttered by the lips of this woman, did not embrace more than matters of mundane interest. But whether or not it comprehended authority over things in heaven as well as things on earth—celestial as well as terrestrial concerns—one thing is certain, that the expression immediately following clearly embraced Messianic hopes and prospects. "Son of David" is a name or title of Messiah in Old Testament Scripture. He was to be the Son of David according to the flesh, as well as "the Son of God with power;" David's Son as well as David's Lord, according to the Saviour's own words. She thus acknowledged him as Lord, and so possessed of unlimited power over all beings, human, angelic, and demoniac; over all agencies of every order; and over all ailments, whether diseases proper or diabolic possession. She acknowledged him also as the Christ of God, whose very mission was to impart prophetic instruction, to make priestly satisfaction, and to exercise kingly authority in, over, and on behalf of his people. There was thus a whole creed, at least in germ, contained in the words of this woman's address to the Saviour. How had she attained such knowledge? Had the Spirit of God enlightened her? Had the Saviour been made known to her, as afterwards to Saul, by direct and special revelation? We believe that there was the agency of the Spirit in making application, but that there had been human instrumentality in conveying instruction. We read in the third chapter of this Gospel, at the eighth verse, that, in addition to the great multitude that followed Jesus from Galilee, Judæa, Jerusalem, Idumæa, and beyond Jordan, also "they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him." Was it not most likely that from some of these, on their return home, this woman had heard something about the Saviour—who he was, what he was, as well as about the great things he was doing? The Spirit's agency was needed to make application to her heart of the fragmentary truths she may have gleaned in the way indicated. Here, again, the sinner's case is similar. He hears about Christ, he reads about him, he is taught many facts in relation to his life, death, resurrection, ascension, saving power, and second coming to judgment; but yet "no man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." We need the instruction, it is true, but we require also the illumination of the Spirit. That we may derive real benefit from Scripture truth, and spiritual profit from the facts of Christ's history, the Spirit must "guide us into all truth," even the "truth as it is in Jesus."

V. HER EARNEST PLEADING. In her earnestness she makes her daughter's case her own; she regards the affliction of so near a relative as personal; in her daughter's affliction she was afflicted. "Have mercy on me!" she said—on me, who feel myself so identified with my daughter, who suffer in her suffering, who am distressed in her distress, whose life is bound up in her life. Again, "Have mercy on me!"—a wretched woman, a sorely tried and almost broken-hearted mother. Then she repeats the petition with a slight variation, saying, "Lord, help me!" How touching this repeated request! how pathetic! How eloquent as well as earnest! It is, indeed, this earnestness that forms the chief element of its eloquence.

VI. THE TRIAL OF HER FAITH. She had been sorely afflicted, and now her faith is sorely tried. In the Gospel of St. Matthew the recital is fuller, and these trials stand out more conspicuously. The first trial of her faith is our Lord's silence. "He answered her not a word." What can this strange silence mean? Is it indifference or neglect? Is it want of sympathy with her own distress and her daughter's affliction?

Or is it dislike and contempt for a descendant of a sinful and accursed race? And yet she must have heard of his compassionate kindness and tender pity, as also of the ready relief he was in the habit of granting to every son and daughter of affliction. She must have heard, from all who told her of him, that no applicant had ever met with repulse or refusal at his hand. Is she to be an exception? Will he not condescend to take the slightest notice of her? Another sore discouragement arose from the inconsiderate and unsympathetic conduct of the disciples, who came forward and actually besought him to dismiss her. "Send her away," they said, "for she crieth after us"—send her away at once (*ἀπολυσον*, aorist imperative), and get rid of her annoyance; it is troublesome and even indecorous to have her following us, and painful to have to listen to her crying after us in this fashion. Either dismiss her summarily or grant her request, that, one way or other, we may get rid of her. Even if we understand the disciples in this latter sense, as asking their Master to give her what she wanted and let her go, it was a cold selfishness that prompted it, and an ungracious spirit that thus wished to be done with her importunity as speedily as possible. Their interference, however, had only the effect of drawing forth in reply a reason for *refusal*. When our Lord did break silence, it was only to indicate the circumscribed sphere of his present mission, and thus to imply her exclusion: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It appears to some that even in this refusal there was a faint gleam of hope, and that this despised woman of Canaan might have replied,—Though not of the house of Israel, yet I am a lost sheep, and greatly need the Good Shepherd's care; and though he has not come specially on an errand of mercy to my race or me, yet I am come in quest of him and to seek his favour. But another obstacle, seemingly more formidable, bars the way. There had been silence and seeming indifference; there had been a refusal, and that backed by a reason—a strong reason, and one that did not admit of any questioning; and now there is *reproach*—apparent reproach. This sorrowful woman, in this her direst extremity and the darkest hour of her misery, summoned up all her strength of resolution to make one final effort; and coming closer to the Saviour, and with still greater reverence as well as earnestness, she "worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me." And yet, the reply to all this profound respect and unflinching importunity appeared at least to be of the most discouraging character, and in fact the unkindest cut of all: "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs."

VII. HER PERSEVERANCE AND HUMILITY. Her perseverance was truly wonderful, and her humility was equal to her perseverance. She turns the seeming slight into an argument. Our Lord, in the similitude he employs, does not refer to the wild, ferocious, gregarious dogs of the East, that are owned by no master, but prowl about for food, and that supply, in some sort, the place of street-scavengers. He refers to young or little dogs (*κυνάρια*), and to children, or little children (*παιδιον*), and the friendly relations that are well known to exist between them, denying the propriety of defrauding the children of food in order to feed even their canine pets—to take their bread and cast it to dogs (where observe the paronomasia in *λαβεῖν* and *βαλεῖν*). "Yes, Lord: for indeed the little dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." The proverbial expression implied (1) the impatience of dogs desirous of food; and (2) the impropriety of taking the bread intended for children and giving it to dogs before the children had got their portion; consequently (3) the injury of conferring benefits on one to the detriment of others, and prematurely before the claims of those others had been properly met and fully satisfied. Such might be the feeling of the Jews, if the Gentile stranger should step into some privilege before they had received their proper place and promised share. The opinion of Theophylact, and of many besides, that the Gentiles are meant by the dogs, because they are looked upon as unclean by the Jews, or the narrower notion of Chrysostom, that this woman herself is stigmatized by the name of dog from her persistence and blandness of entreaty, are unnecessary, if not unwarranted. The appropriateness of the proverb, and of the mode of treatment it implied, is admitted by this woman who gives it a most felicitous turn and favourable interpretation on her own behalf. She frankly and fully admits the reasonableness of supplying food to the children first, but insists at the same time on the humane principle and considerate practice of allowing the little dogs to eat the crumbs that fell accidentally, or were let fall on purpose, beneath the table. She accepted the situation thus indicated; she was

content to take the place of dogs under the table; she was satisfied with the crumbs that remained after the children had got their full share. It was as if she said,—I own my inferiority; I am not a descendant of Abraham, nor a daughter of Israel; I do not claim equal privileges or equal dignity with one of that highly favoured race. I only ask the position which a kind master allows his dog that is under the table, and the friendly treatment which such a master is in the habit of granting to his canine favourite; and that is to be fed from the children's crumbs, as the source (*ἀπό*) of their nourishment. A crumb is all I crave. One crumb from my Master's table will comfort me and cure my child.

VIII. THE REWARD OF HER PERSEVERANCE AS AN EXAMPLE AND ENCOURAGEMENT. We have seen how, in the face of what seemed contemptuous silence, of positive refusal—a refusal made more positive by the strong reason alleged in its support—of apparent reproach and depreciation, this woman kept to her purpose, converting a slight into a sound argument. By firmness of purpose, by strength of will, by great humility, by astonishing earnestness, above all by vigorous faith, she held on, and, like Jacob with the angel, she did not let the Saviour go until she obtained the blessing which she sought. What a pattern of faith and patience combined this woman exhibits! She had made probably a long journey, undergone much fatigue, spared no pains, shrunk from no toil, till she reached Jesus; and, after going so far and doing so much to reach him, she seems doomed to disappointment; and is treated with silence, with sternness, and with something like scorn; and yet by a quick instinct she makes that scorn helpful to her suit. And now at last she has her reward. Not only does she gain the object about which she was so earnestly solicitous, but she receives the cordial commendation of our Lord. "For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter;" or, as St. Matthew has it, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

IX. PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. We learn from this most interesting and encouraging narrative the *power of faith* and its prevalence. If "all things are possible with God"—and we are sure they are—"all things are possible to him that believeth." It was faith brought her to Christ; it was faith kept her close to Christ, in spite of so many and so great discouragements; it was faith obtained the blessing from Christ; it was faith called forth the commendation of Christ, for in that faith he recognized the gracious principle he had himself implanted in her soul. Accordingly, it was her faith he so commended. He did not say, "Great is thy humility," and yet she displayed the grace of humility in an eminent degree; nor "Great is thy fervency," and yet she was uncommonly fervent in her petitions; nor "Great is the love thou bearest thy child," and yet she was a model at once of womanly tenderness and motherly affection; nor "Great is thy patience," and yet her patience had few parallels; nor "Great is thy perseverance," and yet her perseverance commands our admiration, even across the centuries. No; but "Great is thy faith." It was the mother grace and parent of all the rest. Lord, grant each of us like precious faith! 2. Our *duty to our children*, and to the young in general, is strikingly taught us here. Taking this woman for a pattern, we should plead with God frequently, fervently, and faithfully on behalf of our children, until Christ be formed in their heart. And oh, if any of them should be a victim of the evil one, and possessed by some evil passion, some sinful propensity, some destructive lust—in case any should be thus "grievously vexed with a devil"—how anxious, how laborious, how perseveringly prayerful we should be on their behalf! and how we should imitate this woman's importunity, and, like her, make their case our own until we obtain for them the blessing! 3. A further lesson is to go to Christ in every *season of distress*, nor despair, however long he is pleased to keep us waiting. Here are two lessons put together, for they properly go together. Whatever be our distress—whether personal affliction or domestic trial, whether the undutifulness of children or the godlessness of their lives, whether it be hostility of foes or the coldness of friends, whether it be worldly loss or sore bereavement—we should go and tell Jesus, acknowledging his all-sufficiency, spreading the whole case before him, confessing our great unworthiness, and pleading earnestly with him for mercy and help. And here another and a kindred lesson suggests itself, and that is firmness and *freedom from despondency* in trial. It pleased the Saviour to try the woman of Canaan severely and long; but it was for her good, for the glory of his grace in her, and for a pattern to ourselves. He proved her

faith, but his object was to improve and strengthen it; he meant to exhibit its sterling qualities as a pattern to his disciples. Many a one, tried as this woman was, would have sunk down into sullen silence, or hurried off in a fit of passion, and given up her suit. It might have been so with some of ourselves; but he will humble us before he exalts us; he will have us trust in him, though he slay us. Some token will be vouchsafed for our encouragement, even in the sorest testing-time. It was probably so with this woman. She may have discerned a tenderness in the tone of the Saviour's voice, or a gentleness in his look, that encouraged her to persevere. But, even in the absence of such, we must impress on ourselves the conviction that there "may be love in Christ's heart while there are frowns on his face," as it is quaintly expressed by an old divine. Further, we may be kept long waiting, but we shall not wait in vain, any more than this poor woman. Our prayers may not be favoured with an immediate answer; but, though not answered at once, they will be accepted at once, and answered at the time most expedient for us, as well as most conducive to the Divine glory.

"For though he prove our patience,
And to the utmost prove,
Yet all his dispensations
Are faithfulness and love."

J. J. G.

Vers. 31—37.—A miracle of restoration. I. THE DEAF MUTE HEALED. 1. A difference of reading. According to the common text we learn that our Lord, "departing from the coasts [borders] of Tyre and Sidon, came unto the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts [borders] of Decapolis;" but according to the best critical authorities "through Sidon" must be substituted for "and Sidon;" and then the sentence reads as it stands in the Revised Version: "Again he went out from the borders of Tyre, and came through Sidon unto the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the borders of Decapolis." This reading is unquestionably the more difficult, but exceedingly interesting, as it shows the extent of our Lord's tour through those Gentile lands. Proceeding twenty miles northward from Tyre, he came to Sidon, the great seat of Phœnician worship and of the idols Baal and Astarte; and then passing along the foot of Lebanon, and crossing the Leontes or Litany, the largest river of Syria, he came to the sources of the Jordan, whence he descended along the eastern bank into the region of Decapolis. The probable object of this *détour* was to gain privacy, instruct more thoroughly his disciples, escape his enemies, and visit the many towns and villages dotting this route. 2. *An interesting though practically unimportant question.* Was the subject of this miracle deaf, with an impediment in his speech, or both deaf and dumb; in other words, a deaf mute? If he was deaf and had (1) only an impediment in his speech, he had not been born deaf, for in that case he would have been destitute of speech altogether. He may have become deaf in early childhood, before the organs of speech attained their full development; or he may have been deaf for such a length of time that, through long disuse, his tongue had lost its power; or disease may have supervened, and inflammation or ulceration tied the lingual nerve. Whatever the cause of this impediment was—whether it was occasioned by rigidity of the membrane arising from long desuetude, or whether it was produced by the diseased state of the muscles, or whether it was the result of early deafness—the impediment was so great that it differed little from the entire absence of the power of articulation. This poor man was thus little, if at all, better than a deaf mute. But (2) several reasons induce the belief that this man was actually dumb as well as deaf. Among these we may mention the statement at ver. 37, where the Jews, who witnessed this miracle, said, "He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb (*ἀλάλους*) to speak;" and the word *μωγίλλος* is used in the LXX. Version of Isa. xxxv. 6 in the signification of dumb; also, in a reference by St. Matthew to this same journey of our Lord, and to the miracles performed at that time, the evangelist mentions the dumb speaking, (*κωφοὺς λαλοῦντας*). It may be observed that, while *κωφός*, meaning "dull" or "blunt," may be applied to either hearing or speech, the meaning of the word in St. Mark is always "deaf," though the usual meaning of it is "dumb," being synonymous with *μωγίλλος* in the classics. 3. *Nature of this privation.* This affliction was twofold. Two

organs were virtually wanting, two senses were sealed, two channels of communication with the external world were closed. The case of this person, if not actually identical with that of a man deaf and dumb, is illustrative of it. And oh, how great this double privation! How difficult for those, whom God has blessed with the free use of all their bodily organs, to appreciate the privation of one who is deaf and dumb! These twin calamities are, it is true, physiologically reducible to one. They stand related as cause and effect. Deafness at birth, or loss of hearing soon after, usually involves dumbness. Deafness is the radical defect, dumbness is its natural result. This man is said to be *κωφός*, which expresses the primitive want; while *μογιλάλος* (the root is *μωγ*, equivalent to *μωγ*, as in *μωχ-θός*, labour, equivalent to something great laid (*θε*) on one), expresses the natural and necessary consequence—the great obstacle to speech. This latter word, therefore, is wrongly rendered “stammering,” and rather denotes one unable to utter articulate words. *Hearing*, like *sight*, and as much as *sight*, is an inborn faculty; but *speaking* is a learnt art. Man of himself can utter sounds, and that is all, but not speak words. The latter he learns by hearing; but how can he learn without hearing, and how can he hear if he is born deaf? Further, in deafness the organ is wanting or defective; in dumbness the organ is present, but it might as well be absent, as it is disabled and incapable of use. When the ear is stopped, silence seals the tongue. But, though the cause may thus be one, the calamity affects two senses, and debars the use of both. 4. *Extent of this privation.* On due consideration, it will be found that these “children of silence,” as they have been called, are doomed to as severe deprivations as any to be found in the whole catalogue of human woes. By nature they are excluded from all those pleasures which the ear drinks in and the tongue gives out. Nor do we refer merely or mainly to the melody of sweet sounds—to the thrilling tones of harmony, to the witching spell of minstrelsy, to the rapturous delights of music, as it is heard from the birds that make the woodland vocal with their notes, or from the itinerant musicians that stay for a few moments’ space the step of the man of business, or cheer the spirit of the downcast; or as it swells in the concert, or sweeps so grandly in the oratorio, or is wafted aloft from a thousand voices on the open air of heaven. The deaf are excluded from other joys more homely, but not less hearty. They are shut out from the pleasant voice of childish prattle, from domestic or friendly converse, from intellectual interchange of thought, from literary amusement, scientific research, or political intelligence. From all these sources of information, instruction, and enjoyment they are by nature shut out. And here we come to the worst phase of their condition—the blank it leaves the mind. When sound is shut out, a chief entrance of knowledge is barred. The exclusion of sound is the exclusion of all that knowledge and of all that multitude of ideas that sounds convey or suggest to the mind. 5. *Contrast between the respective privations of the deaf and blind.* We deeply commiserate the condition of the blind, from whom the fair face of nature is shrouded in darkness, whose eyes are never gladdened by the light of the sun by day or of the moon and stars by night, from whom the beauty of the human countenance and the loveliness of the landscape scenery are alike hidden, while “the shadow of death” rests “upon their eyelids.” And yet the deaf mute is in a worse condition than even they. You can talk with that blind man, and tell him many things. He has an ear to hear, and learns much from your lips. You can read to him, and he listens to the lessons of heavenly wisdom, or human philosophy, or every-day experience, which you thus communicate. He is entertained at the same time that he lays up a store of useful knowledge. Not so the deaf mute; he is unimproved by all you say or read. Your speech does not instruct him, for he cannot hear. Books are useless to him, for he cannot read because he is ignorant of sounds made visible. He learns not, for thus the key of knowledge is taken away. Deaf mutes are, therefore, shrouded in deeper than midnight gloom; they grope in a “darkness that may be felt.” Thus one of the great inlets of knowledge is taken away; one of the main sources of enjoyment is hermetically sealed; one of the chief links that bind men in social intercourse is snapped; one of the silken bands that unite men in intercommunion is severed. Thus the deaf mute stands apart, and in lonely isolation from his fellow-men; thus one of the sweetest streams of human happiness is frozen up. We have thus looked at the condition of the deaf mute of our own day, as closely resembling, if not quite the same with, that of the man that was brought to our Lord, as it is here

written, "They bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech."

II. THE SIGNS WHICH THE SAVIOUR USED. 1. *What these signs were.* After taking him aside, he "put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue." These signs which he employed did in no way contribute to the cure he effected, and yet they were significant of what he was about to do. They were far from meaningless manœuvres or purposeless displays of power. They were no empty make-believes. Our Lord meant to arrest the man's attention and excite his expectations. He did so with the impotent man when he said, "Wilt thou be made whole?" He did so with the blind men when he asked them, "What will ye that I should do unto you?" and when he added, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" He does the same in the case before us. But as this man knew nothing of the language of sounds, our Lord addressed him in the language of signs. He touched the parts affected to apprise him of his intention to reach the seats of the infirmities and remove the maladies. He put his fingers into the ears to signify that he would take away the obstructions that were therein, and open up the way for sound to enter—that he would penetrate every opposing barrier, and bestow a new acoustic power. He touched the tongue with moisture from his own mouth to lubricate the stiffened member, to loosen whatever impediment confined it, and restore its agility of motion. Thus by signs he gave the man some indication of what he meant to do. But by these signs he taught him another lesson. The second lesson was one of faith in our Lord himself as the Author of his recovery, as the Source from which healing power flowed, and as able to do all and accomplish all fully and perfectly which he had signified. A third thing, perhaps, he meant to convey was that he sanctions the use of those means which he himself appoints. Here the means are all his own. His own fingers he inserted into the deaf man's ears; with his own saliva he moistened his tongue. The power of healing is all his own. He can work without means, or against means, or by means; he here directs to the use of means, but only such means as he himself devises. These he sanctions, these he consecrates, sanctifies, and crowns with success. Further, our Lord adapts his signs to the source of the ailment, and accomplishes a perfect cure. It might seem sufficient to insert his finger into the deaf ear without touching the tongue with saliva; and likewise, in the account of the cure, it might be thought enough to say "his ears were opened," without adding that "the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain." The touching and consequent opening of the ear would undoubtedly have reached the origin of the ailment, and cured the defect at its source; but there would not have been a complete cure. The sufferer would only have been put into the condition of one *learning* to speak; but the cure, in the very mode of it, was meant to save him this trouble, and to secure to him the *ability* to speak at once. Hence it is not only said of him *ἔλαλε*, "he spake," that is, had now the power of speaking, but the term *ἠρθῆς* is subjoined, from which we learn that, without any loss of time, and without any process of educating the ear, he spake correctly and normally, as if he had been accustomed to do so from his youth, and not as one exercising a power just bestowed. The distinction between the sense of hearing and the organ of hearing in this passage is noticeable: the former is *ακοή*, and the latter *ῥα*. 2. *Symbolic actions.* Another and a different symbolic action follows the signs we have been considering. The Saviour turned his eyes to heaven. By this time the Saviour had familiarized the sufferer to the use of signs, and accustomed him to the language which they conveyed. He guards him against any misinterpretation of the fore-mentioned signs. He turns his mind from those signs, as though by themselves they were in any way conducive to his cure. He raises his thoughts to heaven, to remind him that all relief was to be looked for from thence; that the blessing which made the means effectual came from above; that "every good gift and every perfect boon is from above coming down from the Father of lights;" that the power to cure in this case was Divine; and that, as the Lord from heaven, he himself had brought that power down to earth. While, on the one hand, he showed that the power emanated from himself, he, on the other hand, acknowledged the Father who had sent him to put forth such power. While he was manifesting by certain signs or one kind of symbolic action that power proceeded from his own person, he was proving by another kind that in that person divinity was shrined; that "it pleased the Father that in him"—the Son—

"should all fulness dwell;" that "all power in heaven and on earth" was entrusted to his hands. He was indicating, moreover, the unity of purpose and of plan that subsisted between the Father and the Son; that he was doing the will of the Father, and accomplishing the work with which he had been commissioned. "The Father," he said, "worketh hitherto, and I work;" "It is my meat and my drink to do the will of him that sent me." He sought thereby the Father's glory, as he himself said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him;" and again he says, "I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do." Thus here and now, as always, he sets forth his mediatorial dependence on the Father, and the eye he had to his praise: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me;" "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him." 3. *Duty of imitating the Master.* As it was with the Master, so in measure is it with the disciple still. Ever and anon we must turn our eyes to heaven. While our hands are duly employed in the daily occupations of our calling upon earth, our hearts must mount upward on the wings of faith, in praise for mercies received and in prayer for the blessing to be bestowed: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." Otherwise our most strenuous efforts will be frustrated, our most fondly cherished hopes blasted, and our highest aspirations doomed to disappointment; for "except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." While we thus lean on an Almighty arm, and depend for everything on God, we must have a single eye to his praise, ever keeping his glory as our chief end in view, and ever seeking from himself grace and strength and steady purpose to do his will.

"To do thy will I take delight,
O thou my God that art;
Yea, that most holy Law of thine
I have within my heart."

4. *The significance of the Saviour's sigh.* "He sighed;" and no wonder, when he thought of the ruin that sin had wrought, and of the wreck which man had in consequence become. The Saviour sighed when he looked abroad on suffering humanity, when he reflected on the miseries of a fallen race, and when especially he contemplated the living example of that misery that then stood before him. He sighed in sympathy with our sufferings, "for we have not an High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Blessed be God for such "a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God." He sighed in sorrow for our sins. In them he saw the cause of all; in them he saw the bad and bitter fountain-head; in them he saw the fruitful source of so much woe; in them he saw that fearful thing that darkened heaven above us, opened hell beneath us, and cursed the earth on which we tread; in them he saw that fell infection that has disordered, in a certain sense and to a certain extent, all the members of the body and all the faculties of the soul, so that "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint;" in them he saw the prolific germ of all those "ills that flesh is heir to," and of all those pangs that make the heart of humanity ache: for "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," and not only death, but with it all our woe; in them he saw, too, the grievous load he was himself one day to bear, when he "bare our sins in his own body on the tree," so that it has been truly as tersely said—

"With pitying eyes, the Prince of peace
Beheld our helpless grief;
He saw, and oh! amazing love!
He came to our relief."

He sighed when he thought of the works of the devil and his malice against man, and how human weakness had given him power to deform the body by disease, and deface the image of the Creator in the soul of his creature. Perhaps, too, he sighed when, as has been shrewdly suggested by an old divine, he saw the new temptation to sin that the man's renewed powers would expose him to—the evil things the ear would hear, the idle things the tongue would speak, the wicked things in which both organs might be

made instrumental. "Therefore," said the psalmist, "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked are before me." The explanation of the Saviour's sigh by a German writer on the miracles, though ingenious, is not sufficiently comprehensive, when he traces its cause to "the closed ear of the world" of which the deaf man was the symbol, "which does not perceive his Word, and therefore does not receive it;" and thinks his view commended, if not confirmed, by St. Mark's numerous exhortations to spiritual hearing by maxim, parable, and symbol. The maxim is, "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear;" and connected with it is the parable of the earth's producing fruit after the reception of the seed, or salvation attained by right hearing of the word, while the present symbol corroborates the same truth.

"The deaf may hear the Saviour's voice,
The fettered tongue its chain may break;
But the deaf heart, the dumb by choice,
The laggard soul, that will not wake,
The guilt that scorns to be forgiven—
These baffle e'en the spells of Heaven:
In thought of these, his brows benign
Not e'en in healing cloudless shine.

The correct explanation, while not exclusive of this view, is inclusive of much more. 5. *The single word spoken by the Saviour.* "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened," was the single utterance after the heavenward look and inward sigh. The root of this word is the Hebrew *pathach*, to open; from a similar Syriac root comes *ethpatach*, the imperative of the passive conjugation Ethpael; then, by assimilation of *theta* and aspiration, we get *ephphatha*. And no sooner had he spoken that word than its omnific power appeared. The dull ear was endowed with a power it had never known before, or to which it had been long a stranger. The hindrance that prevented the free passage of the air, or deadened its undulations, was removed; the defect in its organism was remedied. The pleasure of drinking in sweet sounds and of listening to the music of human speech came with all the freshness of a new faculty. The man felt as though he had found himself in a new world, or had entered on a new and improved existence, or had risen many steps higher in the scale of being. And so, in truth, he had. But this was not all; the tongue was freed completely and at once from whatever it was that had fettered it, the impediment was quite gone, and the articulation was, notwithstanding the long disease, immediately perfect. He could now tell to all around the happy change he had undergone—the perfect nature of the cure, the pleasure that filled his soul, the gratitude that glowed in his heart and which then flowed from his lips. 6. *The cure a cause of adoring wonder.* Here we must admire, and, while we admire, adore, the power of Christ, for it is the power of God. Nothing short of Almighty power could have accomplished this wonder-work of mercy, for "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?" And none, surely, save the Lord could thus unmake what sin and Satan had marred, removing all deficiencies, and renewing the afflicted with more than original powers. Here, too, we trace distinct proofs of his Messiahship. Blind as the multitude so frequently were, they could not shut their eyes on this fact; they were so astonished that they could not help admitting it. They said, "He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak;" they evidently had an eye to the words of the prophet, and the works he predicted the Messiah would do, when he said, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing."

III. PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION. 1. *Inferences.* This miracle, like others of our Lord's miracles, warrants three inferences: (1) his superhuman power, and by consequence his Divine commission; (2) a glorious coming day foreshadowed, when all physical disabilities shall be finally and for ever removed; and (3), what is of personal and practical importance, the inference of the Saviour's ability to do for the soul what he so often and so effectually did for the body. The impediments of the body are but

dim shadows of the worse impediments of the soul. By nature the ear is deaf to the Divine commands, the tongue dumb when it should celebrate his praise; while the heart is hard, the affections frozen, the mind shrouded in darkness—the man in a state of isolation, without fellowship with God or communion with the saints. Christ says, “Ephphatha,” and oh, what a change ensues! The ear is opened to hear God’s Word, the heart, like Lydia’s, to receive his grace, the tongue untied to praise his name and call upon him in prayer. 2. *His due meed of praise.* In view of all this we must join with the multitude and say, “He hath done all things well.” It was well for the man that was healed, because in his case it was next to life from the dead; it was well for his relations, for their trouble was all but over; it was well for his friends, because their enjoyment of him and pleasure with him were unspeakably increased; it was well for mankind, that the Son of man had authority to exercise such power upon earth; it was well for each of us, because herein we have an earnest of what he will do for the soul, a pledge of the renovation of soul and body, an assurance of the future and final perfection of both. He did all things well, for he “did no iniquity, neither was guile found in his mouth;” he did all things well, for he went about continually, doing good. More particularly, he did all things well, for whatever he did he did largely and liberally, modestly and humbly, generously, graciously, gratuitously, and yet gloriously. Like the first creation, when God saw everything that he had made, “behold, it was very good;” so, when the works of Christ are contemplated, the concurrent testimony of heaven and earth will be, that “he hath done all things well.” Saints on earth will say it, for they are the trophies of his mercy, the triumphs of his grace, the memorials of his goodness, and the monuments of his power; saints in heaven will say it, adding, He opened our ears by his power, our hearts by his spirit, our tongues by his grace; he washed us from our sins in his blood, making us kings and priests unto God. Multitudes when he was on earth said it; multitudes yet unborn will say it. We ourselves are entitled to say it, for his healing power has reached us; he has removed our maladies, renewed our souls, made us to delight in his Word and rejoice in his love.

“He speaks, and, listening to his voice,
New life the dead receive;
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
The humble poor believe.

“Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb,
Your loosened tongues employ;
Ye blind, behold your Saviour come,
And leap, ye lame, for joy.”

J. J. G.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VIII.

Vers. 1, 2.—The opening words of the first verse seem to imply that our Lord remained for some time on this, the north-east, side of the Sea of Galilee. The multitude being very great. The word here rendered “very great” is *παιμόδιον*, a word not to be found anywhere else in the New Testament. But according to the best authorities, the true reading is *πάλιν πολλόν*; so that the words would run, *when there was again a great multitude*. It has been supposed with some reason that, as an old ecclesiastical Lection began with this chapter, this may have led to the substitution of *παιμόδιον* for *πάλιν πολλόν*, in order to make the Lection more complete in itself, avoiding this reference to

the context. In the original Greek construction the word *ἄχλος*, in the singular, is disintegrated in the next clause by a passage into the plural (*καὶ μὴ ἔχοντων τί φάγουσι*). This is properly marked in the Revised Version by the words, *a great multitude, and they had nothing to eat*. Our Lord has compassion on them. He desires not only to heal the sick, but to feed the hungry. We may here notice the burning zeal of the multitude. They were so intent upon hearing Christ, that they forgot to provide themselves with the necessities of life. They continued with him for three days and had nothing to eat. Whatever small supplies they might have brought with them at first were now exhausted; and still they remained, “esteeming his words to be

more than their necessary food." Our Lord on his part was so full of zeal for their good, that during all that time, with little interval, he had been preaching to them, denying himself rest, refreshment, and sleep. So true were those words of his, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

Ver. 3.—For divers of them came from far. These words, as they stand in the Authorized Version, might be supposed to be an observation thrown in by the evangelist himself. But the correct rendering of *ἤκαστος* is not "came," but *have come*, or rather, *are come*; and instead of *τινὲς γὰρ* at the beginning of the clause, the more correct reading is *καὶ τινὲς*. This change makes the clause almost of necessity to be a part of our Lord's own words going before. It was not until the third day that our Lord interposed with a miracle, when the people were absolutely without food, and would therefore feel more sensibly the blessing as well as the greatness of the miracle. Their extremity was his opportunity.

Ver. 4.—Whence shall one be able to fill these men with bread here in a desert place? St. Matthew (xv. 33) gives the question thus: "Whence should we have so many loaves in a desert place, as to fill so great a multitude?" The disciples, measuring the difficulty by human reason, thought that it was impossible to find so many loaves in the desert. But Christ in this necessity, when human resources fail, supplies Divine; and meanwhile the disciples' estimate of the impossibility illustrates the grandeur of the miracle.

Ver. 5.—The seven loaves and the few small fishes appear to have been the modest provision for our Lord and his disciples. As he often retired into the desert, they were no doubt accustomed to carry small supplies about with them, though poor and scanty. In the former miracle of the multiplying of the loaves (ch. vi. 35), we find that their stock consisted of five loaves and two fishes. It was, of course, just as easy for our Lord to multiply the smaller quantity as the larger. But he chose so to order it that the original quantity of food, as well as the number requiring to be fed, should in each case be different, in order that it might be evident that they were different occasions, although the miracles were of the same kind.

Ver. 6.—And he commandeth the multitude to sit down (*ἀναγεσθῆναι*)—literally, to recline—on the ground (*ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς*); not the green grass, as before. It was a different season of the year. "He gave thanks." In this expression is included the recognition of the Divine power to enable him to work the miracle. Christ indeed, as God, was able of his own will and by his own power to

multiply the loaves. But as man he gave thanks. And yet, as Dr. Westcott excellently remarks, "The thanksgiving was not for any uncertain or unexpected gift. It was rather a proclamation of his fellowship with God. So that the true nature of prayer in the case of our blessed Lord was the conscious realization of the Divine will, and not a petition for that which was contingent." And having given thanks, he brake, and gave to his disciples (*ἔκλασε, καὶ ἔδιδου*). Observe the aorist and the imperfect. The giving was a continual act, till all were filled.

Ver. 8.—And they did eat, and were filled (*ἐχορτάσθησαν*). Wycliffe renders it, "were fulfilled;" according to the original meaning of "to fulfil," namely, "to fill full." And they took up, of broken pieces that remained over, seven baskets—as many as there were loaves. In the record of the other similar miracle, the number of baskets corresponded to the number of the disciples. Here, as in the former miracle, far more food remained after all were fed than the original supply on which our Lord exercised his miraculous power; for each basket would contain much more than one loaf. The Greek word here rendered "basket" (*συνπλῆς*) is a different word from that used for "basket" in the record of the other miracle (ch. vi. 43). There it is *κόφινος*. The *κόφινος* was a hand-basket of stout wicker-work. The *συνπλῆς* was a much larger basket, made of a more flexible material, perhaps "rushes," like our "frail." It was by means of such a basket, called in Acts ix. 25 *συνπλῆς*, but *σαργάνη* in 2 Cor. xi. 33, that St. Paul was let down through a window at Damascus. This supplies another evidence, if it were needed, that these two recorded miracles took place on different occasions. Cornelius à Lapide mentions an opinion that the *συνπλῆς* was double the size of the *κόφινος*, a large basket carried by two.

Ver. 10.—He entered into a ship (*εἰς τὸ πλοῖον*)—literally, *into the boat*; probably the same boat which he had ordered to be in attendance upon him (ch. iii. 9)—and came into the parts of Dalmanutha. St. Matthew (xv. 39) has "the coasts of Magdala;" more properly, "the borders of Magaden." This place was in all probability about the middle of the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, where now stand the ruins of the village of El-Mejdel.

Ver. 11.—And the Pharisees came forth.—St. Matthew (xvi. 1) says that the Sadducees came with them—and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. They had already asked for a sign from heaven (Matt. xii. 38); but now this miracle gives them occasion to ask again. For when they saw how greatly it

was extolled by the multitudes who had benefited by it, it was easy for them to urge that it was an earthly sign, and might have been wrought by him who is called "the god of this world;" and so they insinuated that he had wrought this miracle as well as his other miracles by the power of Satan. Therefore they seek a sign from heaven, that he who dwells in heaven might thus bear witness that he came from God, and that his doctrine was Divine; the Pharisees probably meant that if he did this they would believe in him as the Messiah, and lead the people to the same faith. The Sadducees, who were practically atheists, thought that no sign could be given from heaven by God, seeing that in their opinion it was doubtful whether there was any God to give it.

Ver. 12.—He sighed deeply in his spirit (*ἀναστενάζας*). Another graphic touch of this evangelist; such as he had learnt in all probability from St. Peter. The word occurs nowhere but here. It is the outcome of grief and indignation, in which, however, grief predominates. There shall no sign be given unto this generation (*εἰ δοθήσεται σημεῖον*). This is a Hebrew idiom, based upon a form of taking an oath which prevailed amongst the Jews. The full form would be, "God do so and so to me, if so and so." Hence the hypothetical part of the clause came to be used alone, expressing a very strong form of denial or refusal.

Ver. 13.—And he left them, and again embarking—*ἐμβὰς for ἐμβὰς εἰς τὸ πλοῖον*—departed to the other side. Again and again our Lord crossed this sea, that he might instruct the Galileans dwelling on either side; in fulfilment of Isa. ix. 1, "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, . . . by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light."

Ver. 14.—And they had forgotten (*ἐπελάθοντο*)—literally, *they forgot*—to take bread (*ἄρτους*); loaves. The conversation which follows took place on the boat while they were crossing. The passage would take perhaps six hours. And it was during that time that they would want food; for when they reached the port, they would find it in abundance.

Ver. 15.—Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. St. Matthew (xv. 6) says, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees;" thus St. Mark identifies the leaven of the Sadducees with that of Herod. "Leaven" here means "doctrine." They were not to beware of this, so far as the Pharisees rightly taught and explained the Law of Moses; but only so far as they corrupted that Law by their own vain traditions, contrary to the Law of

God, St. Luke (xii. 11) calls this leaven "hypocrisy;" because the Pharisees only regarded outward ceremonies, and neglected the inward sanctification of the Spirit. St. Jerome says, "This is the leaven of which the Apostle speaks where he says, 'A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.' Marcion and Valentinus and all heretics have had this kind of leaven, which is on every account to be avoided. Leaven has this property, that, however small it may be in quantity, it spreads its influence rapidly through the mass. And so if only a little spark of heretical doctrine be admitted into the soul, speedily a great flame arises, and envelopes the whole man."

Ver. 16.—According to the most approved readings, this verse should be read thus: And they reasoned one with another, saying, We have no bread. There is something very artless and simple in this narrative. Our Lord speaks of "leaven;" and the mention of this word reminds the disciples that they had forgotten to bring bread with them in the boat; and fearing lest Christ should direct them, according to his wont, to land on some desert shore, they were in some anxiety how they might obtain what they would need; and so they disputed among themselves; one, it may be, throwing the blame upon another.

Ver. 17.—And when Jesus knew it (*καὶ γινὼς ὁ Ἰησοῦς*)—literally and far more correctly, *and Jesus perceiving it*—he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? Jesus perceived the direction in which their thoughts were moving, by the power of his divinity. It is as though he said, "Why reason ye because ye have no bread, as though I was referring to natural things, and speaking concerning bread for the body, and wishing you to be anxious about that; as though I could not provide that for you, if necessary, just as easily here on the sea as I did just now in the desert?" Dr. John Lightfoot ('Hebrew Exercitationes on St. Matthew,' vol. ii. p. 204) says, "The rule of the Jews was very strict as to the kind of leaven that was to be used; and the disciples supposed that our Lord was alluding to this when he cautioned them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." Perhaps they also thought that our Lord was conveying a silent reproof to them for not having brought a sufficient supply of bread with them. The whole incident, while it shows their transparent simplicity of character, exhibits also their dulness of apprehension.

Vers. 19, 20.—Here St. Mark is as careful as St. Matthew to mention the details of the two miracles, even to the reference to the two kinds of baskets in which the fragments were gathered up. They had a

distinct recollection of the facts, but they had failed to catch their spiritual import.

Ver. 21.—How is it that ye do not understand? A better reading here is *ὁπω* instead of *πὼς οὐ*. Therefore the words should run, *Do ye not yet understand?* It is as though our Lord said, “You ought to have perceived, both from my words and from my actions, that I was not speaking concerning earthly heaven or earthly bread, but concerning spiritual doctrine.” St. Matthew here (xvi. 12) is careful to tell us that this reproof of Christ quickened their intellects, and forced them to understand.

Ver. 22.—This miracle is recorded by St. Mark alone. And he cometh to Bethsaida. A better reading is *ἐρχονται* for *ἐρχεται*, *they come unto Bethsaida*. Which Bethsaida? It seems most probable that it was Bethsaida Julias. This Bethsaida was in the tetrarchy of Philip, who improved and adorned it, and named it Julias, in honour of the emperor's daughter Julia. A reference to ver. 27 seems to make it quite clear that it must have been this Bethsaida, and not the Galilean Bethsaida on the other side of the lake. It is not surprising that there should have been, adjoining this great lake, more than one place called Bethsaida, *i.e.* the “place of fish.” And they bring a blind man unto him, and besought (*παρακαλοῦσιν*)—literally, *beseech*—him to touch him. St. Mark is fond of the graphic present. There is here, as at ch. vii. 32, something almost like dictating the mode of ours. They seem to have imagined that the healing virtue could not go forth from Christ except by actual contact.

Ver. 23.—And he took (*ἐπιλαβόμενος*)—literally, *took hold of*—the blind man by the hand, and led him—this is the rendering of *ἐξήγαγεν*; but a great weight of manuscript authority points to *ἐξήνεγκεν* as the better reading, *brought him*—out of the village (*ἐξω τῆς κώμης*). This Bethsaida was a village; but Philip had raised it to the rank of a city (*πόλις*), though it still seems to have retained its old appellation. Our Lord “led” or “brought” the blind man out of Bethsaida, for the same reason that he led the deaf and dumb man (ch. vii. 33) away from the multitude: (1) for the sake of prayer, that he might collect his mind, and unite himself more closely to God, and pray more intently and earnestly; (2) that he might shun vain-glory and human praise, and teach us to shun it also. And when he had spit on his eyes—this act had a mystical meaning; it was the instrument by which his Deity operated—and laid his hands upon him, he asked him, *Seest thou aught?* Here were three acts—(1) the spitting, (2) the laying of the hands on him, (3) the questioning of him. We gather from ver. 25 that our

Lord's hands were applied to the blind man's eyes. From the analogy of the miracle in the last chapter (vii. 33), we may perhaps infer that our Lord touched the man's eyes with saliva on his finger, and that the hands were withdrawn before he asked him if he saw aught.

Ver. 24.—And he looked up, and said, *I see men as trees, walking*. He looked up—a natural action. He instinctively looked in the direction of the source of light. The words in the Greek of the next clause are as follows:—*Βλέπω τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ὥς ὡς δένδρα ὁρῶ περιπατοῦντας*: *I see men; for I behold them as trees, walking*; that is, “I see something confusedly and obscurely, not clearly; for I see what I think must be men, and yet so dimly that they look to me like trees, only that I know that men move from their places, whereas trees do not.” The word “walking” refers to the men, and not to the trees, as is evident from the Greek. This man, as yet partially blind, saw men as in shadow, magnified by the mist, looking much larger than they really were.

Ver. 25.—Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes, and made him look up—this is the Authorized Version rendering of *ἐποίησεν αὐτὸν ἀναβλέψαι*: but the better authenticated reading is simply *καὶ διέβλεψε*, *and he looked steadfastly*—and was restored, and saw all things clearly. Now, here it pleased our Lord, not suddenly, but by degrees, to give perfect sight to this blind man. And this he did (1) that he might give examples of different kinds of miracles, showing that “there are differences of operations,” and that he, as sovereign Lord, was not absolutely tied to any one particular method of working; and (2) that he might administer his power in increasing measures, as the faith of the recipient waxed stronger; that so he might gradually kindle greater hope and desire in him. It may be that the spiritual condition of this blind man was one which specially needed this gradual method of treatment. Our Lord was a wise and skilful Physician. At first he healed him in part, as one who imperfectly believed; that he who as yet saw little with a little sight, might believe more perfectly, and so he healed at last more perfectly; and thus by this miracle Christ teaches us that for the most part the unbeliever and the sinner is by degrees illuminated by God, so as to advance step by step in the knowledge and worship of God. “By this miracle,” says Bede, “Christ teaches us how great is the spiritual blindness of man, which only by degrees, and by successive stages, can come to the light of Divine knowledge.” The experiences of this blind man in gradually recovering his eyesight show as in a parable

the stages of the spiritual change from absolute darkness to glimmering light, and thence to bright and clear vision. Cornelius à Lapide says, "We see an example of this in children and scholars, who must be taught and instructed by degrees. Otherwise, if the master, impatient of delay and labour, seeks to deliver all things to them at once, he will overwhelm their mind and their memory, so that they will take in nothing; as wine, when it is poured into a narrow-necked vessel, if you attempt to pour in the whole at once, scarcely any will enter, but almost all is wasted." A Lapide adds the well-known Italian proverb, "Piano, piano, si va lontano."

Ver. 26.—This verse, according to the best reading, runs thus: And he sent him away to his home, saying, Do not even enter into the village. It thus appears that Bethsaida was not the home of this blind man. He might naturally have wished to exhibit himself in Bethsaida, where many must have known him, and to have sung the praises of his great Benefactor. But this was far from what Christ wished. He wished to be in seclusion. He had no desire to excite more than could be helped the idle curiosity of the multitude. His miracles were for the sake of his doctrine, and not his doctrine for the sake of his miracles. The whole character of his administration was retiring and gentle. "My doctrine shall distil as the dew." "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any hear his voice in the streets."

Vers. 27, 28.—And Jesus went forth, and his disciples, into the villages of Cæsarea Philippi. This verse seems to corroborate the view that the Bethsaida just referred to was Bethsaida Julias. Cæsarea Philippi lies at the roots of Libanus. Cornelius à Lapide says that it was originally called Dan, the place where two little streams united, namely, Jeor and Dan. These two streamlets so united make the Jordan, whence the name Jeor-Dan, or Jordan. But since Pan, the god of shepherds, was better known to the Gentiles than Dan, a Hebrew tribe, it was hence called by them "Panaea." It is called Banias at the present day. It lay at the extreme north, as Beersheba lay at the extreme south. Hence the phrase, "from Dan even to Beersheba." On this account many neighbouring Gentiles, especially the Phœnicians, flocked to this city, as is frequently the case with border towns. And so Christ visited this neighbourhood, not only because it presented favourable opportunities to him for teaching Jews and Gentiles alike, but also that he might speak more freely than he could have done in Judæa concerning a Messiah, whom the Jews expected as their king. In Judæa itself, and especially in the neighbourhood of

Jerusalem, it would have been perilous to speak on such a subject; for the scribes would at once have accused him to the Roman power that he was seeking the kingdom. The student who wishes for further information respecting the site of Cæsarea Philippi may consult with advantage Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine' (ch. xi., "The Lake of Marom and the sources of the Jordan"). A more familiar derivation of the Jordan than that given by A. Lapide is that of the "descender," from Jarad, "to descend." Our Lord went from Bethsaida Julias directly northwards towards Panaea, named by Philip the Tetrarch Cæsarea Philippi, to distinguish it from the other Cæsarea in Samaria on the Mediterranean coast. It will be observed that he went into the villages of Cæsarea Philippi, avoiding the city itself. In the way thither he asked his disciples, . . . Who do men say that I am? This incident is mentioned also by St. Matthew and St. Luke. St. Luke (ix. 18) says that he was alone praying, his disciples being doubtless not far off. According to this evangelist, our Lord says, "Who do the multitudes say that I am?" thus distinguishing them more particularly from his own disciples. The common people among the Jews knew that not long after the Babylonian Captivity the gift of prophecy had ceased amongst their nation. So they thought that Christ was not a new Prophet, but one of the old. They could not but see in him the renewal of the powers of the old prophets, their miracles and their teaching; but there were very few of them who believed that he was the Messiah. The great body of them were offended at his poverty and humility; for they thought that Messiah would appear amongst them with royal state as a temporal king. So that when some said, moved it might be by the sight of his miracles, "This is that Prophet that should come into the world," they did but give utterance to a momentary and fugitive feeling, and not a firm or abiding conviction. The mass of mankind are fickle, easily led to change their opinions. Perhaps some of the Jewish multitude thought that the soul of one of the ancient prophets had entered into Christ, according to the Pythagorean notion of the transmigration of souls; or perhaps they thought that one of the old prophets had risen again in the person of Jesus. For though the Sadducees denied a resurrection, the great body of the Jews believed in it. Some thought that Christ was John the Baptist, because he resembled the Baptist in age (there was only six months difference in age between them), as he also resembled him in holiness and in favour of preaching. It was but a short time before, that John the Baptist had been put to death by Herod.

His character and actions were fresh in their memories; and Herod himself had given currency to the idea that the Baptist had risen again in the person of our Lord. Then there was Elijah. Some thought that our Lord was Elijah, because it was known that Elijah had not died, and because there was an expectation, founded on Malachi's prophecy (iv. 5), that he would return. They thought, therefore, that Elijah had returned, and that our Lord was Elijah.

Ver. 29.—By this second putting of the question, our Lord warned his disciples that they who had been better instructed ought to think greater things of him than these. It was necessary that he should show them that these current opinions and floating notions were far below his real claims. Therefore he says with emphasis, But who say ye that I am?—ye, my disciples, who, being always with me, have seen me do far greater things than they; ye, who have listened to my teaching, confirmed as it has been by those miracles; ye, who yourselves also have been enabled to work many miracles in my name;—who say ye that I am? Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. St. Peter here spoke as the mouthpiece of the rest. The suddenness and terseness of the answer is eminently characteristic of St. Peter. In St. Matthew's narrative it is given a little more in full, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." But the strength of the answer really lies in St. Mark's words, "Thou art the Christ," that is, the promised Messiah. What, however, St. Mark does omit here—a circumstance not to be passed without notice—is the great blessing pronounced by our Lord upon St. Peter (Matt. xvi. 17—19) as the reward of his confession. The explanation of this omission is to be found in the fact that this Gospel is really for the most part St. Peter's Gospel, recorded by St. Mark. It has already been observed, that, as far as it is possible to do so, considering Peter's prominent position amongst the other apostles, he retires into the background. It was necessary that it should be recorded that he made the good confession of our Lord as the Messiah; but beyond this the evangelist suppresses all mention of the distinction subsequently conferred upon him, although the rebuke which he afterwards received is recorded in full. It is, moreover, a significant circumstance (noticed in the 'Speaker's Commentary') that this Gospel was written at Rome, and in the first instance for Roman readers.

Ver. 30.—And he charged them (*ἐπερίμνησεν*)—a strong word, implying almost rebuke, he strictly charged them—that they should tell no man of him. Why was this? There were many reasons for this reticence. The state of parties in Palestine was most

inexpedient for such a disclosure at that time. Those who were favourable to his cause would have wanted at once to take him by force and make him a king. In fact, some of them made no secret of their intentions (John vi. 15). Those, on the other hand, who were opposed to him were only watching their opportunity to destroy him. Moreover, his own disciples had yet many things to learn; and besides all this, faith in his Godhead would be easier when his death should have been followed by his glorious resurrection and ascension.

Ver. 31.—And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, etc. In St. Matthew's narrative he says (xvi. 21), "From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples," etc.—from the time, that is, of this great confession; from the time when he had openly acknowledged to his disciples the truth of his essential Divinity; from that time he began to instruct them as to his passion and his death. There are two great principles of faith, namely, (1) the Divinity and the humanity of Christ, and (2) his cross and passion, whereby he has redeemed the world. And it was necessary that the disciples should be thus instructed in his amazing dignity as the Son of God, lest, when they saw him put to death, they might doubt as to his Godhead. And after three days rise again. St. Matthew and St. Luke say, "on the third day"—the day of his death counting for one, and the day of his resurrection for another, with one clear day intervening.

Ver. 32.—And he spake the saying openly (*παρρησία*); literally, without reserve. This sudden announcement excited St. Peter. It was a new and startling communication. Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. The word *προσλαβόμενος* indicates that he "took hold of him," to lead him apart, as though to have the opportunity of warning him with the greater familiarity and secrecy. So say St. Chrysostom and others. Peter would not have his own confession of Christ thus evacuated, as it were; nor does he think it possible that the Son of God could be slain. So he takes him apart, lest he should seem to reprove him in the presence of the other disciples; and then he says (Matt. xvi. 23), "Mercy on thee, Lord (*ἰλέως σοι, Κύριε*): this shall never be unto thee."

Ver. 33.—But he turning about, and seeing his disciples, rebuked Peter. The words indicate a sudden movement (*ὁ δὲ ἐπιστραφείς*), accompanied by a keen searching look at his disciples. Then he singles out Peter, and addresses to him, in their presence, the severe rebuke, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not (*οὐ φρονεῖς*)—literally, thou mindest not—the things of God, but the

things of men. The form of words is the same as that used by our Lord to Satan himself, when he was tempted by him in the wilderness. It reminded him of that great conflict. The visions of worldly glory again floated before him. The crown without the cross was again held out to him. This explains his language. Peter was indeed rebuked; but the rebuke was aimed through him at the arch adversary who was addressing him through Peter. Here is the striking significance of his "turning about." Peter was for the moment doing the tempter's work, and in "turning about" our Lord was again putting Satan behind him.

Ver. 34.—He called unto him the multitude with his disciples. This shows that there was an interval between what had just taken place and what is now recorded. Our Lord now, without any further special reference to St. Peter, delivers a lesson of universal application; although, no doubt, he had Peter in his mind. If any man would (*εἰ τις θέλει*) come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. This self-denial ought to extend to everything, even to life itself, which we ought to be willing to resign, if need be, for the sake of Christ. *Take up his cross.* It is as though he said, "Let him take up his cross, as I have borne my cross, that I might be the standard-bearer and Leader of all cross-bearers—I, who carried the cross on which I was to be crucified to the mount of Calvary." St. Luke (ix. 23) adds the words (*καθ' ἡμέραν*), "daily:" "let him take up his cross daily;" thus showing that "every day," and often "at every hour," something occurs which it becomes us to bear patiently and bravely, and so on continually through our whole life. He takes up his cross who is crucified to the world. But he to whom the world is crucified follows his crucified Lord. This cross assumes various forms; such as persecution and martyrdom, affliction and sorrow of whatever kind, appointed by God; temptations of Satan, permitted by God for our trial, to increase our humility and virtue, and to make brighter our crown.

Ver. 35.—Because the cross is sharp and afflicting, our Lord animates his followers to bear it by the thought of its great and everlasting rewards. The meaning of the verse is this: He who by trying to shun the cross and to escape self-denial would save his life here, will lose it hereafter.

But he who loses his life here for the sake of Christ, either by dying in his cause or by denying and mortifying his lusts out of love for him, he in the life to come shall find his life in the bosom of Christ and in eternal joy.

Ver. 36.—What doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (*ζημιωθῆναι*); literally, *forfeit his life* (*ψυχῇ*). The word *ψυχῇ* in the Greek, originally meaning simply "breath," as the sign of life, is of very comprehensive import, embracing not merely "the breath of life," but also the "soul," or immortal part of man, as distinguished from his mortal body, also the mind or understanding, as the organ of thought. "Life" seems here to be the best English synonym, as being, like the Greek *ψυχῇ*, the more comprehensive term.

Ver. 37.—In exchange (*ἀντάλλαγμα*) for his life. The Greek term here means an "equivalent," "a compensation." The "life," in its largest sense and meaning, defies all comparison, surpasses all value. It has been bought and redeemed with the precious blood of Christ; therefore the whole world would be a poor price for the soul of one man.

Ver. 38.—Our Lord here looks onward to the day of judgment. Whosoever shall be ashamed of me. "Whosoever:" the word includes all, whatever their position or circumstances may be. "Shall be ashamed of me;" that is, shall deny my faith, or blush to confess me here. Of him shall the Son of man be ashamed; that is, Christ will despise him, when he shall appear with power and great glory, in that sublime majesty which he gained by his death upon the cross. In this adulterous and sinful generation. It adds to the disgrace of being ashamed of Christ that the shame is manifested in the presence of the base and the worthless; and therefore our Lord exhibits the contrast between the mean and contemptible people in the presence of whom men are ashamed of him here, and the magnificent assemblage in whose presence he will be ashamed of them hereafter. The cross of Christ appeared to the great body of mankind to be shameful and contemptible. To the Jews it was a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. Hence vast numbers, whether through shame or fear, did not dare to confess it, and still less to preach it. And therefore it is that St. Paul says (Rom. i. 16), "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—10.—*The Giver of bread.* That the miracle of feeding the multitude should be repeated, and that two evangelists should record both events, is a testimony

to the generous and considerate kindness of the Saviour, and to the instructive nature of the sign. We discern in this narrative an illustration of—

I. CHRIST'S ATTRACTIVE MINISTRY. A great multitude followed him to listen to his teaching, and were so absorbed in his words as to neglect attention to their bodily wants. Far from home, and without a supply of food, they hungered. Eating of the spiritual bread, they were satisfied in their souls. But they had bodily wants also.

II. CHRIST'S CONSIDERATE COMPASSION. A man himself, Jesus was touched with a feeling of human infirmities. He had known hunger. The people had come from far; they had remained in the neighbourhood where he was for three days; their little stock of provisions was exhausted, and, should he send them away fasting, many might faint upon the road. All this Jesus thought of, and his sympathy was aroused. He had compassion, not only upon their souls, but upon their bodies.

III. CHRIST'S USE OF ORDINARY HUMAN RESOURCES AND MEANS. Jesus might doubtless have created bread of stones, as the tempter had once challenged him to do. But he chose to use what provisions were at hand, and to make the few loaves and fishes which the disciples held as a reserve of food, the basis, so to speak, of his miraculous action. The Lord does not despise, or dispense with, human means or human agencies. As on this occasion he directed his disciples to distribute the bread they had, so ever does he use his people and their powers and possessions as means of good to their fellow-men.

IV. CHRIST'S DEVOUTNESS IN THANKSGIVING. Being himself the Son of the Father, he yet, in the name of the dependent children, acknowledged the bounty and beneficence of the Giver of all.

V. CHRIST'S MIRACULOUS POWER. We are not told how it came to pass, but it is recorded that the four thousand found the slender provision sufficient for all their wants. When the Saviour provides, there is always enough and more than enough for all.

VI. CHRIST'S FRUGALITY AND ECONOMY. The Lord was liberal, but not lavish. There was no waste in his arrangements. The broken pieces that remained were gathered, and doubtless saved and used. Because he miraculously supplied what was needed, it did not follow that he would suffer anything to be wasted and lost.

Ver. 4.—*Whence shall man's soul be fed?* God's creatures are altogether and for ever dependent upon him. It is not now and then only that our Creator and Lord interposes upon our behalf, to supply our wants and to relieve our distresses. There are times when we specially recognize, and occasions when we specially feel, his care. But his bounty and watchfulness are, in fact, unceasing. "In him we live, and move, and have our being;" "He openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desires of every living thing." *Bread for the body, and bread for the soul, alike are from him.* Our daily bread is his daily gift, and our daily remembrancer of him the Giver. In most cases the provision is so regular, by reason of fruitful seasons, by which he fills us with joy and gladness, that men take the gifts of his providence as a matter of course, and are (in instances) only now and then reminded of their dependence when he withholds his bounties. Our souls equally wait upon him, and to them he also giveth "their portion in due season." The sinless beings above doubtless receive from him abundant spiritual good, in an unceasing stream. If our human spirits are not constantly and of course enriched by his Spirit, it is not that his loving-kindness is little or intermittent; it is because our sin prevents us from receiving what is, to believing, lowly, and obedient natures, ever accessible. There is, accordingly, something altogether special in the supply provided for the deep and everlasting needs of human spirits. The unfallen angels, by reason of their purity, have constant fellowship with God, and doubtless are daily fed from his presence, and drink of the stream of his life. But we—poor, sinful children of men—need to be dealt with in a way Divine wisdom alone can devise, to suit the emergency of our position. The plenty of the Divine granary must be brought to our perishing souls by a heavenly interposition and grace. It is in Christ Jesus, the Son of the Eternal Father, that the bread of God becomes the bread of man. Needy, and therefore longing for spiritual food; sinful, and therefore unable to obtain and partake of such food, except in the way Infinite wisdom and grace may open up to us,—we are in a pitiable case until the beneficent Father sends unto us a heavenly and all-

sufficient supply. No fellow-creature can give what our circumstances demand and our nature craves; no fellow-creature can satisfy the necessities of one suppliant, far less those of the unnumbered race of humanity. "From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?"

I. This language suggests THE CRY OF THE SPIRITUALLY HUNGRY FOR BREAD. Man cannot "live by bread alone." Unless he change his nature, or blunt its urgencies, and stifle its voice, it calls aloud for God.

"Far and wide, though all unknowing,
Pants for thee each mortal breast;
Human tears for thee are flowing,
Human hearts in thee would rest."

oftentimes do men try to misinterpret this utterance, to persuade themselves that it is not God they want; that they are as the brutes, to which due fodder and litter and shelter suffice for satisfaction and enjoyment. When one looks upon the vain endeavours of misguided, self-deluded men, one cannot help crying aloud, in the memorable language of the Hebrew prophet, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" There is a deep-seated longing, a recurring appetite, which prompts all men in whom is any spiritual vitality at all to look for more than earth, than man, can give. We ask for truth, for without truth—and especially truth concerning God—is no satisfaction possible to the created soul. "Oh that I knew where I might find him!"—him, my Maker, Lord, and Judge; that I might know why he has made me, why he has stationed me here on earth, what is the purpose of his wisdom concerning me! Mock me not with dust and stones, but give me bread indeed, even the true knowledge of God! And as conscience assures each child of man that, if this God whom he fain would know take any interest in him, he cannot but remark his disobedience and his errors, the heart within calls aloud for the favour and acceptance of the great King. "How shall a man be just with God?" "Wherewithal shall I come into his presence?" Will he "lift the light of his countenance" upon me, and be gracious to me? Must my sins be a barrier between me and my God; or can he, will he, overturn and cast them away, and admit me to his grace and fellowship and peace? Turning his regard inward upon himself, and perceiving his own helplessness in the struggle which is not to be avoided, the poor and feeble child of man asks for strength. How shall I gain strength for duty in times of weakness and temptation? How realize the intention of the Creator concerning me, that I shall enter into the conflict, sustain its toils, brave its dangers, and come forth victorious? And when the day of suffering and the night of sorrow come, can the human soul find comfort in the lessons of human philosophy, in the balm of human sympathy? Alas! these cannot suffice. Nor can aught truly soothe and effectually succour the weak and weary, the sad and lonely, the bereaved and dying, save the hand which fashioned the soul and made it susceptible to anguish—the heart that, by a Divine sympathy and consolation, heals the wounds that it permits. And when "heart and flesh fail," who but the Creator and Saviour can prove "the Strength of the heart, and its Portion for evermore"? No human plummet can fathom the river all must cross, no human hand uphold the feeble, trembling feet amidst the dark, cold waters. Be sure of this: as long as man retains a nature higher than that of brutes that perish, so long as his heart is subject to grief, his life is surrounded by trouble, his nature prone to sin; so long he will ever and anon cry out for supernatural succour and comfort, and call upon his God. Spiritual hunger is no fancy of the sentimental, no artificial demand of the leisurely and cultivated. It is a fact—a fact which (however it may be regarded) is not to be denied, and without considering which, our view of our human nature and our knowledge of ourselves must needs be incomplete and delusive. Bread for his soul man will ask for, and, unless he have it, he will hunger, pine, and perish!

II. This language suggests THE SILENCE OF THE WILDERNESS TO THIS APPEAL. Out beyond the Lake of Tiberias, away from towns and villages, in the solitudes of the green hillsides, how was the want of the multitude to be supplied? Blades of grass were, not ears of corn, stones were not bread. "Here in the wilderness" was no answer to the demand of the hungering—none! The wilderness could only leave those to perish who trusted to its tender mercies. An emblem of the world's powerlessness to meet

the case of our spiritually dependent and hungering race! The world is the scene of our trial and proving, the occasion of our manifold temptations. Of what use is it to look to it for sympathy, succour, strength, and salvation? It cannot satisfy you, search and prove it how you may. Is that rich and luscious fruit that hangs from yonder bough? Alas! it is the apple of the Dead Sea, dust and ashes between the teeth. Is that a lake of sweet, pellucid waters which gleams in the glowing sun in yonder hollow? Alas! it is the mirage of the desert, which mocks the thirsty travellers, offering them sand for water. So with the pretences of the world to satisfy the hungering soul. These pretences are vanity and delusion. Equally vain to help, though more honest, is the world, when its response is otherwise. It sometimes acknowledges its utter powerlessness: none to help, none to pity, none to deliver and to save! Whilst some who reject and despise the message of religion abandon themselves to selfish and worldly aims, and seek to still the voice of conscience and to repress the aspirations of the soul in the pursuits of pleasure, self, or power, there are others in whose breasts is no peace and no hope. They cry aloud in the wilderness; but no answer comes to them, save the mocking echoes from the hard, dead rock. No truth, no law, no grace, no hope, no heaven, no God! Such is their interpretation of the echoes of the desert. And we cannot wonder that, incredulous of every higher, better message, they abandon themselves to doubt, despondency, despair. From this cheerless and desolate prospect, let us turn to facts fitted to gladden every depressed and anxious heart.

III. The language suggests to us THE DIVINE PROVISION OF THE BREAD OF LIFE. When the disciples of Jesus asked him this question, "Whence shall one be able to satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" they must have been thinking of their own inability. For they could not have forgotten how, not far from this very spot and not long since, their Master had fed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes. If they had been there without him, they might have been as helpless as they were when the father of the lunatic boy brought his son into their presence, and entreated their compassion and aid. But the Lord Jesus was himself the answer to this inquiry. He had but to bless the bread, and distribute it by the hands of the disciples, and, for even so vast a multitude, there was "bread enough and to spare." Thousands were fed when Jesus was the Master of the feast. No miracles were more evidently and decisively than these of feeding the thousands, parables concerning Christ himself. St. John has recorded the discourse which our Saviour uttered in Capernaum, in which Jesus asserted his own mission and office and power. "My Father," said he, "giveth you the true Bread from heaven. For the Bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. . . . I am the Bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." In this language our Divine Lord evidently referred to that marvellous incident in the history of Israel when the wants of the people were supplied by daily provision of manna in the wilderness. More especially he brought before the minds of his hearers the great fact that the supply of human wants is due to the grace and interposition of God himself. Bread does not come to us *from* the wilderness, but it comes to us *in* the wilderness; and it is the Father above who sends it—none but he! Obviously, the figurative language in which Christ describes himself appeals to our best, purest, most sacred feelings. God is the Father, who will not leave his children without bread. He cares for his spiritual family, considers their wants, hears their cry, and in his wisdom and love secures for them all that he sees to be for their good. Our Lord Jesus Christ is himself the Divine provision for the needs of men. "He that eateth the flesh, and drinketh the blood of Christ, has life eternal." For it must be borne in mind that the heavenly Father who has given us his Son, has in him virtually given us all the resources of his boundless compassion and grace. "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Do our hearts cry aloud for spiritual truth? God gives us this in Christ, who is himself the Truth—the revelation of the Father's mind and will. The heart that finds "Immanuel—God with us," finds God himself—for Christ is "the brightness of the Father's glory"—reads the writing of God's own hand, hears the utterances of Truth Divine. "He that hath seen me," says Christ, "hath seen the Father." Is our heart restless until assured of the forgiveness and the favour of our God? Hungry for the smile of Heaven, does it turn heavenward a wistful gaze? God in Christ gives us this

first great necessity of the sinful soul. Jesus came to call sinners to repentance, but he came at the same time to assure the penitent of pardon—the purchase of his precious blood. What bread is to the hungry, that is pardon to the contrite, humbled, suppliant transgressor. And this is the gift of Christ, who came with “power on earth to forgive sins.” Do we feel an inner craving for a strength which we do not find within ourselves—for a power which shall uphold us in the labour and the conflict of this earthly life? Not only to know the will of God but to do it—this is the want of man’s soul. Power to do this is bread to his hungering nature. Do you not, indeed, when you best know yourselves, feel that truly to live you must have strength to live to God? And who but God himself can impart this strength? It is given in Jesus. Eat of this bread, and labour shall be sweet and work welcome. His meat and drink was to do the will of him who sent him, and to finish his work. And in his people is “the mind of Christ.” Does not the sorrowful and tempted soul—the soul oppressed by the infirmities of the flesh and the ills of life—hunger for a consolation not to be found from the wilderness? Who of us has not felt this, in seasons of grief and anxiety? Surely, God knows the heart which he has fashioned; he reads its laments, he witnesses its struggles, he comprehends its fears. It was to allay our anxiety, to assuage our griefs, that Jesus dwelt on earth, wiped our tears, tasted the bitterness of our death; that he might be a “High Priest touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” As long as “man is born to sorrow,” so long shall the “Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief,” be the dearest Friend the heart can know. Jesus is a “brother born for adversity.”

“But what to those who find? Ah! this
Nor tongue nor pen can show;
The love of Jesus, what it is
None but his loved ones know.”

IV. This language suggests THE SATISFACTION FOUND BY THOSE WHO PARTAKE OF THIS SPIRITUAL FOOD. We read in the Gospel that, when the great Lord of nature and of men miraculously supplied the wants of the hungering crowds, “they did all eat, and were filled.” In this they prefigured all who, in every land and age, should feed by faith upon the Son of God. Of him it may truly be said, “He filleth the hungry soul with goodness.” Three remarks may be made upon the power of the Lord Jesus to appease the spiritual hunger and to supply the spiritual wants of men. He is sufficient for each, sufficient for all, sufficient for evermore. Each soul, however drawn or driven to Christ—driven by the desperation of want, or drawn by the excellence and abundance of the Divine supply—finds in him all that he himself has promised. To believe, to trust, to love, to follow Christ,—this is to appropriate him, to prove and ~~learn~~ his Divine sufficiency. “He that cometh to me,” says Jesus, “shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” The same faith which first reveals Christ to the soul, and stays its hunger, is the means of attaching the soul to Christ and the means by which the soul finds in him all the fulness of God. For he of God is made unto his people “wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.” The bounty of the Lord Jesus is unrestricted. As the vast multitude of his auditors were fed by his beneficence—as men, women, and children all ate and had enough, so that basketsful of fragments were taken up—so throughout this wide world its teeming and varied populations are all destined to find in him the Saviour of mankind. “I,” said he, “if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” Untold myriads have feasted at the table of Christ, and none have risen hungry and dissatisfied. Still have the ministers of his grace the privilege of announcing to the starving children of men, “‘Yet there is room.’ Come ye in, that the guests may be many and the tables filled. ‘Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.’” Still further to enhance the conception of the preciousness of the great salvation, let it be remembered that it is an unailing, an everlasting, an imperishable satisfaction which is to be found in Jesus Christ. He that eats of earthly bread and drinks of earthly streams hungers and thirsts again; but he who, by Divine mercy, feeds on heavenly food and drinks of the living water hungers and thirsts no more. For him is provided a perpetual feast, an immortal satisfaction and content. Generation succeeds generation, and age follows age. The experience of humanity is prolonged from century

to century. Opportunity is given to every system, to every creed, to every philosophy, to deal with the deep and spiritual necessities of mankind. As one attempt of human wisdom succeeds another, and as each fails in its turn, we hear in our soul within us the cry arise, suggested by human effort and by human powerlessness, "From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" There is no answer. None has been given; none can be given. Happy are we who hear a voice, Divine alike in sweetness and authority, rising above the plaint of the hungry, or breaking the silence of the baffled and the helpless, and uttering forth the welcome declaration of pity and of love, "I am the Bread of life"! And happier still if, convinced of the sincerity and the power of this Divine and compassionate Benefactor, prompted by our human need, and guided by the Spirit of God, *we* respond, in faith and gratitude and hope, "Lord, evermore give us this Bread"!

Vers. 11—13.—*Signs.* This was not an isolated case of the demands on the part of the Jewish leaders that Jesus should work some miracle which they might receive as a sign from heaven. And it was not only during our Saviour's ministry that they preferred such a request. For Paul had occasion long afterwards to complain of the Jews that they "required a sign," and were dissatisfied with the doctrines and with the evidences of Christianity.

I. THE REQUEST OF THE PHARISEES. These men made a point of seeing Jesus, and seem, on this as on other occasions, to have come as a deputation from his adversaries. 1. *What* was it they asked? Not an ordinary miracle, for such Jesus had already repeatedly and publicly performed. It was a sign, not from himself, but from heaven. Any wonder he might work they would attribute to magic or to Beelzebub. But, such was their profession, if he would furnish them with some splendid celestial portent—if he would give bread from heaven or stay the sun in its course—then they would be convinced of his Messiahship. 2. *Why* did they ask such a sign? They were tempting, testing him—putting him to the proof. Had he complied with their wish, they would have seen in him the Messiah they wanted—one prepared probably to wield supernatural power for personal aggrandizement and for political dominion. Should he refuse, they would be confirmed in their rejection of his claims.

II. THE REFUSAL OF CHRIST. Observe: 1. The *feeling* with which he refused. "He sighed deeply in his spirit." Had they come asking for healing, relief, assistance, he would have joyfully complied; but it grieved him to the heart that they should come thus. And he read in their conduct the sign of a widespread carnality, unspirituality, and unbelief. 2. He *disapproved of the spirit* in which the request had been made. He was not only pained by it, he censured and condemned it. They who came, came to carp and criticize, and confirm themselves in their unbelief. 3. He had *already given evidence enough* to justify the faith of such as were candid and open to conviction. He had wrought miracles so many and of such a kind as might assure the thoughtful and spiritually susceptible that he was from God. 4. He knew that *what they asked for, if granted, would not convince them*. The deficiency was not in him; it was in themselves. The principle was applicable, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets," etc. 5. There was *one great sign yet to be given*, in God's time—a sign that should surpass all granted in the olden days; a sign that should leave all unbelievers without excuse—his resurrection from the dead.

Vers. 14—21.—*Misunderstanding.* The evangelists have left untold much which we would fain know, and they have recorded some things which our unwisdom would have dispensed with. The incident here recorded seems trivial, and the conversation arising upon it commonplace. Yet it was not without a purpose that two evangelists were directed to preserve this passage in our Lord's ordinary life.

I. THE WARNING WHICH THE DISCIPLES MISUNDERSTOOD. Christ's ministry of teaching seems to have been one long protest against the current doctrines and practices of the religious leaders of the time. The Pharisees were very generally formalists, and the Herodians secularists, and against both tendencies our Divine Lord's opposition was unceasing and uncompromising. Using figurative language, Jesus cautioned his disciples against the leaven, *i.e.* the influence, of such errors as were characteristic of these religious schools. Although they were so much in his society and

so attached to his ministry, they were not deemed by the Master beyond the need of this wise and faithful admonition.

II. THE CONSTRUCTION WHICH THEY PUT UPON HIS WORDS. The word "heaven" reminded them of bread, and the thought of bread reminded them of their negligence in not having made proper provision for their journey. But their misunderstanding was scarcely due to their oversight; it was rather the consequence of their own slowness of mind to take in their Master's manner of speech. We do not trace impatience, but we do trace a certain dissatisfaction and reproachfulness, in the Lord's language: "Do ye not yet perceive, neither understand?" How often has Christ occasion thus to expostulate with his too unspiritual and inappreciative disciples! We often take Christ's words too literally, without that discernment and sympathy which a wise and gracious Master expects from his scholars.

III. THE CONSIDERATIONS BY WHICH CHRIST REPROVED THEIR MISUNDERSTANDING. 1. They should have known him better than so to misapprehend him. Where were their eyes, their ears, their heart? Had they been susceptible and active, surely a truer, a loftier judgment would have been formed of the Christ, the Son of God. In this case they would not have supposed that he was troubling himself or them with such a trifle as now excited their concern. 2. They should have better remembered the past, especially the occasions upon which the Lord had supplied the wants of multitudes in the exercise of his omnipotence. Such a recollection would have saved them from the misapprehension into which they had fallen.

APPLICATION. Christ's words are to be understood in the light of his nature and his works. To understand what Christ says we must think of him aright, and we must study his teaching in the light of the wonderful deeds which he has performed for the relief and the salvation of mankind. It is want of sympathy and of remembrance which often leads to misunderstanding. He that will do the Divine will shall know of the doctrine.

Vers. 22—26.—*Sight for the blind.* Every form of human privation, suffering, and infirmity which came under the notice of Christ elicited his compassion and his healing mercy, and every such disorder was treated by him as a symptom of the moral malady which afflicts mankind. The diversity of his miracles of healing may serve to represent his power and willingness to restore our sinful humanity, afflicted with many and various ills, to spiritual soundness and health. In this miracle we observe—

I. A SYMBOL OF THE SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS OF HUMANITY. The blind man of Bethsaida may not have been born blind; but his sightless state was well known, and excited the commiseration of his neighbours and acquaintances, who led him to the great Healer and Enlightener of men, that he might touch and cure him. He is an emblem of this humanity, darkened in understanding, incapable of discerning truth, blind to moral beauty, to heavenly glory.

II. A SYMBOL OF SALVATION BY DIVINE CONTACT. Jesus treated this man in a way appropriate to his condition and infirmity. He appealed to the sense of touch, for there was no sense of sight to which to appeal. He led the blind man by the hand, took him apart, spat on his eyes, laid his hands upon him. All this was to make the patient feel that the Divine Physician was there, was interested in him, was working for his cure. It was to reveal his own presence and to call forth the sufferer's faith. And there is no salvation for any by merely hearing or reading about Jesus Christ. The spiritually blind cannot experience his illuminating power except by coming to him in faith. If he enter the heart, reveal his truth and love and power, come into immediate contact with the springs of the spiritual nature and life, then the mind, before insensible to the light of Heaven, begins to appreciate the great realities of being—the nature, the character, the will, of a holy God and Father.

III. A SYMBOL OF THE PROGRESSIVE CHARACTER OF SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT. The most noticeable feature of this miracle is the way in which the cure was wrought—gradually and progressively. Why Jesus did not effect the result at once does not appear. It may have been to teach us how difficult and slow is the process of human illumination, even by the gospel and the Spirit of God. As at first the man saw human figures, which appeared like trees, but moved, so that even his half-recovered vision judged them men; so those to whom the light of the gospel first comes oft-

discern but dimly those spiritual facts and relations which time and experience and Divine teaching will render more vivid and distinct. It is not to be expected that young Christians or recent converts shall understand all such truth as is comparatively clear to the mature and instructed. God's ways herein are like his ways in other departments of his government; order and progression are characteristics of his reign.

IV. A SYMBOL OF THE POWER OF CHRIST TO EFFECT COMPLETE ILLUMINATION. After the further application of the wonder-working hands of Jesus, it is recorded that the blind man "was restored, and saw all things clearly." So in God's light we shall see light. He hath "shined into our hearts." We shall "see God." The vision shall brighter here; and it shall be more than bright—it shall be glorious—hereafter.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—15.—(Cf. on ch. vi. 32—41.)—M.

Vers. 11—13.—*Seeking for a sign.* Christ knew at once what this meant. He "knew what was in man," and refused to commit himself to the pretended inquirers. We have a more difficult course to pursue.

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE DEMAND DEPENDS UPON CIRCUMSTANCES. It may be made in an honest, inquiring spirit, or in order to injure religion. In the former case too much consideration can hardly be given to it, as it is the indispensable preliminary to rational conviction, and the gospel offers evidence for its claims. The spirit in which the inquiry is made may be determined by: 1. *The character of those who inquire.* Bad men may be genuine inquirers, but it is well to know their antecedents. Christ could read the underlying design of the Jews. It may reasonably be expected that inquirers should give some proof of their sincerity, especially if already furnished with many evidences. 2. *The kind of sign asked for.* Here it was "a sign from heaven," i.e. differing from the miracles and previous manifestations of Christ. This implied that they were insufficient, and indirectly pronounced judgment upon the previous words and works of Christ. A question may sometimes reveal a more thorough scepticism than a dogmatic denial. Whilst apparent liberty is given as to what particular sign might be produced, there is really a tone of dictation and unseemly assumption.

II. SUCH A DEMAND EXPOSES THE REPRESENTATIVES OF CHRISTIANITY TO STRONG TEMPTATION. They are invited to criticize God's methods of revelation, and to despise the "means of grace." A position full of unbelief and presumption may insensibly be assumed, such as that of Moses at the rock: "Must we fetch you water out of this rock?" (Numb. xx. 10). They may be induced to attempt to "force the hand" of God. The crime of such a proceeding could only be equalled by its folly. As if those who are insensible to the cross of Christ could be converted by a thunderbolt or a merely supernatural spectacle! It is for Christ's servants in times of popular excitement to preach the old truths, and to appeal to every man's conscience in the sight of God. The improbability of sensationalism producing belief is a growing one. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead" (Luke xvi. 31). So we may now add, "If they believe not One who has risen from the dead, neither will they believe, though he were to be manifested to them in heaven itself."

III. EVEN WERE IT DESIRED IT WOULD BE REFUSED. "This generation" represents all who ask in a similar spirit. 1. *Because the evidence for Christianity is spiritual, not carnal; moral, and not material.* 2. *Because the patent, outstanding facts of the gospel are sufficient:* (1) For the conversion of sinners; and (2) for the confirmation and edifying of saints. 3. *Because it is part of the punishment appointed to such inquirers that they shall ask and not receive, and seek and not find.* 4. *Because it may become a means of turning attention back to the evidence that has been despised or ignored.* It is high time our philosophical inquirers began to inquire why their researches have produced no fruits in evidence or conviction as yet. Why is it that whilst the evidence for the gospel is at least equal to that for any other matters of history, it is yet disbelieved when they are accepted? Is not the reason a moral rather than an intellectual one?—M.

Vers. 14—21.—*The leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod.* The parabolic habit of mind of Christ was essential to the setting forth of Divine truth to the comprehension of men; but as yet the persons who might have been expected to understand his teaching most thoroughly, were continually mistaking it. Whilst their Master discoursed of heavenly things, the thoughts of the disciples were upon the earth. There is nothing so reveals the moral and spiritual distance of persons from one another as the difference in their habits of mind.

I. HOW TOO GREAT A REGARD FOR OUTWARD THINGS BETRAYS ITSELF. 1. *In over-anxiety.* The disciples had by inadvertency omitted to take in a supply of bread ere leaving the shore, and their minds were full of trouble. They began to forecast the inconvenience to which it might expose them. Over-carefulness is a common feature of worldly character. It arises from too great self-dependence and too little faith in God. A certain, moderate attention to earthly wants is a duty, and will be bestowed by every well-regulated mind; but there are limits to be observed. "Be not anxious for your life," etc. (Matt. vi. 25). It is a great aim of the spiritual life to be free from this bondage to minute worries and cares. 2. *In failure to attend to or understand Divine things.* The disciples were so taken up with this little matter that they utterly failed to perceive Christ's meaning, when he warned them against the Pharisees and Herodians. That they should be so was also a proof that they had forgotten the teaching of the two miracles of the loaves and fishes. For this Christ reproved them. His cross-questioning elicited the fact that the *details* of these miracles were still recollected; but the spiritual lessons had been completely lost. So to speak, these spiritual *jours de force* had been thrown away upon them. How hard a race has the Divine life with earthly concern and anxiety in the soul! There is a littleness in such habits of thought that effectually prevents the great ideas of the Divine kingdom from entering the mind. Herein is to be found the explanation of the failure of many services and sermons, which in themselves may have been faithful and devout enough: the hearers are occupied with worldly cares. "The cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the Word, and it becometh unfruitful" (ch. iv. 19).

II. THE DANGER TO WHICH IT EXPOSES. 1. Christ, referring to the doctrine of the Pharisees and Herodians, warned against *that conception of the Messiah, as one who was to be an earthly king, establishing a temporal dominion, which the leaders of Judaism held.* The state of mind of the disciples was eminently favourable to such a view. In them it was only a tendency, in the Pharisees a fixed point of view; and thus the latter wholly missed the spiritual element in the Saviour's teaching. They were filled with visions of national restoration and individual aggrandizement; and failing to receive encouragement from Christ in these, "they were offended in him," and began to seek his destruction. The same danger still haunts the Church of Christ, the absolutely spiritual nature of the Divine kingdom having been one of the most slowly developed of Christian doctrines. 2. *The power and the insidiousness of this point of view are suggested by the figure of "leaven."* Leaven works slowly, but a very little affects a large amount. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." To minds already prepared by habit and tendency in that direction, it would be a comparatively easy thing to adopt the worldly interpretation of prophecy given forth by the Pharisees. Indeed, if they were only let alone, the "leaven" was already within them, and would assuredly develop into the same fundamental heresy. To think thus of Christ and his kingdom is "to come short of it," to our own hurt and ruin; "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17).—M.

Vers. 21.—"Do ye not understand?" The last of a series of surprised, sorrowful, and indignant questions on the part of Christ.

I. SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING WAS A RESULT TO BE LOOKED FOR FROM CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. 1. *From the teaching of Scripture.* It unfolds the will of God, and reveals his mind and character. It is the record of the spiritual history of man in the past. The lives of the Old Testament saints and the history of God's chosen people were intended to acquaint us with the principles of the Divine kingdom, and the purpose of God's dealings with men. "Now these things happened unto them by way

of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Cor. x. 11). "These are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John xx. 31). 2. *From personal experience.* In the case of the disciples, the teaching, example, and miracles of Christ were intended to reveal the merciful and loving purpose of God to redeem the world. This was to be (1) the basis of a personal faith; (2) a principle for interpreting the circumstances of life; (3) an influence for delivering and elevating the human spirit. The consistent lesson of Christ's works—especially of his crowning miracle of the loaves—was that men were to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all needful things of the earthly life would be added. Instead of being lost in anxious deliberations and "reasonings" about ways and means, the true disciple was to look steadfastly to the great end.

II. *THE LACK OF IT IN HIS DISCIPLES DISAPPOINTED CHRIST.* He was astonished and pained at their hardness of heart. The works specially intended to produce faith and understanding had hitherto failed of their legitimate result. We seem to detect in his tone: 1. *Wounded feeling.* He had yearned for spiritual companionship and co-operation. It was ever his desire to draw his disciples into a closer fellowship; but they were discovered to be unfit and unworthy of the privilege. It is as if, too, he was indignant that the honour and love of his Father should be suspected. 2. *Apprehension.* They were in a dangerous spiritual condition, ready to be the prey of every passing temptation. It was as if the foreboding, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8), had already flitted across his spirit.

III. *IT IS AN ACQUIREMENT TO BE DILIGENTLY CULTIVATED.* 1. *How?* By remembrance. The dealings of God with others are plainly set forth in Scripture; but every Christian has a special history of his own in which God has revealed himself. None of the incidents of that personal history should be forgotten. Let him remember all the way by which the Father has led him, the gracious interpositions and revelations that have marked it, etc. By meditation. These circumstances are to be pondered and studied, that their inward meaning may be discovered. Above all, we ought to consider "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us" (1 John iii. 1). 2. *Why?* Because (1) it is essential to the usefulness and happiness of the Christian; (2) it may be increased. In some it can hardly be said to exist at all. Yet if there be faith as a grain of mustard seed it will grow, where diligence and prayerfulness are exercised. Of even those very men Christ at last declared, "No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you" (John xv. 15). "He that doeth the will shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."—M.

Vers. 22—26.—*Restoring the blind to sight.* Illustration of Christ's—

I. *WISDOM.* He rebuked a vulgar curiosity, and perhaps baffled a Pharisaic intrigue. His privacy, so needful for bodily rest and spiritual preparation for the great conflict he felt to be impending, was thus preserved; and the course of teaching and working upon which he had entered was not seriously disturbed. The subject of the miracle was himself preserved from undue excitement with its attendant dangers. And shall we not suppose that a deeper and more spiritual understanding may have arisen between the Saviour and the recipient of his mercy during those solemn and deeply moving experiences which preceded his recovery? His deep, unbroken attention was secured as he felt the Saviour's touch and listened to his voice. By *leading* him away he tested and exercised his faith. By emphasizing the stages of recovery he made it clear to the man himself that it was no accidental occurrence, but a deliberate cure. And in the means used—so evidently inadequate to produce such a result—he showed how supernatural the power that was being exercised. The questions asked encouraged the man to put forth his own power as he received it, and thus to co-operate in the curative process. The final injunction to silence and home-going present the incident as a deep personal experience in the mind of the man, and as an evangelic message to those who were most likely to receive it in simplicity and gratitude.

II. *MERCY.* *Although the shadow of death was falling upon the soul of Jesus, he was full of the instinct and will to save.* There is scarcely any appreciable pause in his work; and retirement is not inactivity, but quieter, deeper, and more continuous.

because more naturally prompted, action. Each case of distress as it arises receives his deliberate and careful attention. His diagnosis of the blind man's state must have been perfect. It was impaired original power that had to be restored, and the treatment corresponded to this fact. The *interest* of the Saviour in the case is as great as that of the saved. The sinister ends of those who brought the blind man, or watched to see what would be done, did not prevent him showing the mercy required. When the bodily cure had been completed, the spiritual welfare of the recovered one was carefully provided for. The aim is complete salvation in every sense of the word. What Christ does he will do perfectly.

III. JUDGMENT. Unworthy men were debarred from seeing the wonders of his saving power. They might have perverted the privilege to an evil end, and so injured themselves and the cause of Christ; so they were shut out. It is a fearful sentence against a place or a person when the spectacle of the Lord's saving grace is denied, and the things that make for peace are hidden from view.—M.

Vers. 22—26.—*The Saviour's method in dealing with individual souls.* I. HE ISOLATES FROM DISTURBING INFLUENCES. The gossips and scheming politicians of the town of Bethsaida. Notoriety. The sense of importance. By his dealings with the sinner in conviction and repentance, he spiritually removes him to his own retirement. He is first brought to be *with* Christ, that by-and-by he may be *in* him.

II. HE ENCOURAGES AND CONFIRMS FAITH. By leading the blind man away, although as yet a stranger to him. By personal contact and operation, and by kindly words, the inner free-will and power of the patient were evoked. The means and the gradual working out of the cure were a demonstration of the Power by whom the miracle was wrought. The gradual realization of spiritual power in those being saved is a crucial evidence of Divine grace, and encourages belief in the ultimate accomplishment of a complete salvation.

III. HE EXACTS IMPLICIT OBEDIENCE. This was the highest exercise of a spiritual kind he had demanded. It was but a phase of the faith already called forth—"the obedience of faith." Having won the trust and confidence of his people, he proves and perfects that by directing the fulfilment of duties the reason for which may not be apparent. It is sufficient that he has commanded. The first use of the restored vision is to avoid those upon whom he had formerly depended—a hard task! The life Christ's people are bidden to lead may not commend itself to their judgment or desire, but it is best for their spiritual interests; and if Christ is to be a complete Saviour, he must be an absolute and unquestioned Lord.—M.

Vers. 22—26.—*Curing spiritual blindness.* I. DELIVERANCE FROM BLIND GUIDES.

II. TRANSFER OF CONFIDENCE TO THE TRUE GUIDE.

III. REVELATION OF THE INVISIBLE POWER OF GOD.

IV. EXERCISING THE SOUL'S NEWLY ACQUIRED POWERS OF SPIRITUAL VISION.

V. GIVING SPIRITUAL DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE.—M.

Vers. 27—30.—*Peter's good confession.* The scene of this is worth notice. It lay to the northward of Bethsaida, amongst the villages in the neighbourhood of Caesarea Philippi. This town, on the site of the ancient Paneas (now Banias), was built by the tetrarch Philip in honour of Tiberius Caesar, and is to be distinguished from the Caesarea of the southern Mediterranean seaboard of Palestine. The country was magnificent (Tristram, 'Land of Israel,' p. 586); wild, wooded, and mountainous, and dominated by the royal castle of Subeibeh. Here, too, was the chief fountain-head of the Jordan (ibid., p. 585). It was a region where the utmost seclusion could be enjoyed, pending the great things which were to take place in the near future. Immediately behind the disciples were the great works which had occasioned such universal wonder and speculation concerning their Master; and they were in a position of comparative leisure and quietude duly to recall and meditate upon them. No better opportunity had hitherto presented itself for the crowning question of Jesus, "*Whom say ye that I am?*"

I. THE IDENTIFICATION WAS DISTINGUISHED FROM SEVERAL ALREADY CURRENT. So marvellous was the career of Jesus, that all ideas of explaining on ordinary grounds

had to be abandoned. In the popular mind the only personages corresponding to Jesus, save John the Baptist, were those of ancient Jewish history, the heroic ages of the theocracy. All were agreed that in him there was a revival or reappearance of the religious spirit of the best days of Israel. 1. *The knowledge of these opinions rendered the judgment of the disciples highly conscious and deliberate, and therefore of great critical importance.* Each of them, as it came to their ears, would doubtlessly be considered and weighed. The popular guesses would be compared with the full and complete experience of Jesus and his work, which they alone possessed, and one by one rejected. But they would serve to awaken their critical attention and their spiritual discernment—constitute, in fact, a sort of ascending scale according to which to adjust their own thoughts. 2. *The certainty to which they had arrived, notwithstanding the variety of opinions of which they were aware, proves how overwhelming the evidence must have been upon which they based their conclusion.* There is no hesitation in Peter's answer. And as spokesman of the twelve he utters their unanimous conviction. How much previous examination and interchange of views does that imply?

II. *How was this conclusion arrived at?* 1. *Not from unscientific guessing.* From their peculiar circumstances this was impossible. 2. *Not from information furnished by Jesus himself.* There is no trace of hinting or suggesting on the part of the Master. His withdrawal from that course of policy which might have enabled him to take advantage of popular influence was against the idea of his being the Messiah of the people's dreams. It was in spite of his mysterious behaviour, therefore, and in complete absence of any information furnished by himself, that they formed their opinion. 3. *It was by a twofold process, viz.: (1) Induction from their experience of his character and works.* For this they were peculiarly fitted; and the searching training of the Master led them gradually but surely to make it. And they were well versed in Scripture. (2) *Inspiration of God.* Elsewhere (Matt. xvi. 17) we read the declaration, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." These two sources of information were not mutually exclusive, but mutually supplementary and confirmatory, as in every Christian mind to-day. Indeed, in a larger view of evidence the spiritual intuition—the most truly moral evidence of the conscience—is but an element of the general moral evidence upon which the induction is based. It is the conscience which is the ultimate judge of all spiritual questions the ordinary understanding cannot completely or satisfactorily settle.

III. *THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ITS ATTAINMENT.* 1. *It was but a recognition of certain correspondences between Jesus and the Messiah spoken of in Scripture.* There was certainty and intelligent perception, so far as their knowledge went. But the full conception of his personality and work was reserved for the future. They knew that it was he of whom the prophets spoke, but about himself in his deeper nature and the spirituality, etc., of his work—in short, of what he was—they were not fully aware. 2. *What they did arrive at altered their entire relation to him.* A new, vague authority attached henceforth to him, and the future was full of a keen expectancy and interest. It gave a new meaning to every word and action proceeding from him, and prepared them for the special training and teaching which they had to receive as his apostles; just as the principle attained by induction of many facts, when its light is turned back upon them interprets them, and we see them as we could not before.—M.

Vers. 29, 32, 33.—*Peter's self-contradiction.* I. *WHEREIN IT CONSISTED.* 1. *In identifying Jesus with the Messiah and yet deprecating his sufferings.* That Messiah should suffer was abundantly declared by the prophets. His death was the greatest testimony he could give to the righteousness of God. A comfortable, earthly, prosperous king could never occupy the spiritual position of the Christ; moral influence, the essential feature of the latter's reign, would be entirely wanting. To the thorough student of prophecy and contemporary life, Messiahship "connoted" suffering, not as an accidental but necessary qualification. 2. *In identifying Jesus with the Messiah and yet assuming such an attitude and tone towards him.* The utmost reverence and submission were not only due to his Lord, but would have been voluntarily rendered had he understood what was meant by his own declaration. In such a case he would never have presumed to dictate or chide.

II. *TO WHAT IT WAS DUE.* 1. *Insufficient realization of what he knew.* He had

divined the true dignity of his Master, but what it involved was not yet felt. The doctrine is often correct when the sense of obligation it ought to produce is not awakened. A great spiritual truth may be perceived and adopted long ere its relations to practical life are recognized; just as a principle in mechanics or a law of nature. Deeper spiritual experience and more sympathetic agreement with Christ in his desire to abolish sin were needed ere this could take place. 2. *Impulse and thoughtlessness.* This was his temperament. He was a man of impulse and affection, rather than of calm, spiritual intuition, or careful, painstaking reflection. It was due to his forward and impulsive temperament that he generally spoke for the others, and was so confident respecting himself in the future. Christianity owes much to such spirits, but they have to be kept in check by more sober thinkers, and disciplined by the lessons of providence. 3. *Worldly conceptions of the kingdom of God.* Had he entertained purer and more spiritual hopes respecting his Master's work, the mischief of his impulsiveness might have been minimized, although it would still have been a source of danger. But with such habitual materialism of aim and desire (common to him with the others) he was constantly committing mistakes, and ready to compromise the cause of Christ. "This world has many Peters, who wish to be wiser than Christ, and to prescribe to him what it is needful to do" (Hofmeister). We ought not to be too severe with Peter whilst we ourselves lean so much for the guidance of the Church to merely human wisdom, and set our own affections for particular persons, or for ourselves, above the well-being of the race; and estimate that well-being not from a spiritual but from a material standpoint.—M.

Vers. 31—33.—*The Christ foretelling his own career.* I. HOW UNIQUE AND MARVELOUS THE PREDICTION! It is a clear, consistent, even symmetrical scheme; as exquisitely balanced and progressively developed as any tragedy of Æschylus or Euripides. A person who could ideally mark out such a future for himself could not have been mere man. The gospel challenges investigation because of the originality and Divine moral elevation of its conception. And by such statements as this it proves how closely the Old and New Testaments are interwoven, and sympathetically and ideally correspondent.

II. IT DEMONSTRATED THAT HIS SUFFERING AND DEATH MUST HAVE BEEN IN THE HIGHEST SENSE VOLUNTARY. He was still at a point where the future was in great degree within his own power. That he clearly knew what lay before him in the event of his continuing steadfast proved that his will was absolutely, divinely free. There were several alternatives within easy reach: these, comprehensively, he put from him in spurning Peter's interference. It is no fate that is blindly shaping out the destiny of a powerless victim; the necessity is a moral and spiritual one, consequent upon motives and aim deliberately preferred.

III. ONLY THE HIGHEST MORAL END COULD JUSTIFY SUCH CONDUCT. To suppose that earthly aims or selfish objects could have determined such a career is a palpable absurdity. Christ is, therefore, through all time, the type of noble self-sacrifice. But it is only spiritual motives and principles that can so inspire. And conscience justifies the sacrifice upon such grounds alone. Whilst we may be incapable of it ourselves, we feel, nevertheless, that it is not madness, but the fulfilment of the great end of our being, and its highest blessedness. If it be but fairly and fully regarded, it furnishes its own justification, and constitutes a judgment bar before which all so-called religious acts and schemes must stand or fall.

IV. BY MAKING THIS ANNOUNCEMENT CHRIST: 1. *Tested the loyalty of his disciples.* 2. *Vindicated and revealed his own pure, unalterable spiritual resolution.* 3. *Furnished them with a support for faith and enthusiastic sympathy.*—M.

Vers. 32, 33.—*Covert temptation.* This scene has, of course, certain features connected with it which cannot be imitated by ordinary persons, or by mere men. Christ exercised a Divine insight and authority. But there are certain *principles* illustrated. We see—

I. HOW IT PRESENTS ITSELF. 1. *Under the guise of friendship.* The love may be real in the individuals who are the instruments of temptation, but their knowledge is not sufficient, or their moral character not so high as it should be. Many of the ruin

terrible moral trials of life owe their power to this circumstance. 2. *With great assumption of reasonableness.* In Peter there was a domineering, "superior" tone. He spoke as one who knew the world, and the impracticableness of his Master's ideas. But even where this is absent there may be a latent contempt for religious aims, and an unconscious appeal to the utilitarian standards of conduct. With many persons the test of reasonableness in moral action is the immediate advantage of those immediately concerned, or the most directly pleasant course of procedure, or the attainment of some recognized worldly object.

II. *How it is to be detected.* 1. *By the aid of the Divine Spirit.* There are necessarily many occasions for moral decision in which it would be impossible to assign reasons for the steps taken, because these are not clearly discerned; yet there may be moral certainty. It is the Spirit of God that is to guide us in such cases. 2. *By comparing spiritual things with spiritual,* e.g.: (1) In moral questions we should distrust proposals which too readily fall in with our own desire for ease, or a pleasant life, or worldly advantage. It is not usual for great duties so to approve themselves. (2) Suggestions are to be rejected which stand in the way of personal consecration, or interfere with moral duties and Divine impulses.

III. *How it is to be overcome.* 1. *By distinguishing between the agent or instrument and the inspirer.* It was a painful thing for Christ to do, but he did not shrink from denouncing the spirit to which the suggestion was due, and the evil one who had used Peter as his tool. This detection, whether it be declared or not, is a great part of the victory. 2. *With promptitude and decision.* Christ turned his back upon the tempter. There must be no dallying or temporizing. Upon every moment that follows discovery of evil an eternity hangs. 3. *By casting one's self upon the Spirit of God.* In prayer: "Deliver us from the evil one." In abiding union and voluntary submission: "Not my will, but thine, be done." "Minding" the things of God, and having the whole attention and affection absorbed by them.—M.

Ver. 34—ch. ix. 1.—*The Master's summons to his disciples.* Like a commander addressing his soldiers. Full of clear vision and resolve.

I. *THE AIM.* (Ver. 38, ch. ix. 1.) It is the overcoming of spiritual error and Satanic influence, and the establishment of the kingdom of God.

II. *THE CONDITIONS OF ITS ATTAINMENT.* (Ver. 34.) These are open to all. The multitude is addressed equally with the disciples. There appears to have been a disposition in many to join themselves to his fortunes. He therefore lays down the terms of his service, so that none may enter it without knowledge of its nature. 1. *Self-denial.* 2. *Cross-bearing.* Not quite identical with the preceding, although involving it. "A Christian," says Luther, "is a *Crucian*" (Morison). "His cross," each having some personal and peculiar grief, sorrow, death, through which he has to pass. This cross he is to take up voluntarily, and to carry, long ere it shall have to bear him. 3. *Obedience and imitation.* There can be no self-assertion or private end to be sought by individual believers. "The footsteps of Jesus." It is a cross even as the Master has to be crucified. The same spirit and plan of moral life must be shown. He is our law and our example.

II. *INCENTIVES.* (Ver. 35—ch. ix. 1.) 1. *Christ's example and inspiration.* He says not "Go," but "Come." He goes before, and shows the way. 2. *The endeavour to save the lower "self" will expose to certain destruction the higher "self;" and the sacrifice of the lower "self" and its earthly conditions of satisfaction will be the salvation of the higher "self."* "Life," or "soul," is used here ambiguously. A moral truism; a paradox to the worldly mind. "It is in self-denial that we first gain our true selves, recovering our personality again" (Lange). 3. *The value of this higher life cannot be computed.* All objective property is useless without that which is the subjective condition of its possession. Righteousness is that which makes individuality and the spiritual nature precious, and imparts the highest value to existence. Every man has to weigh the "world" against his "soul." 4. *Recognition of Christ on earth is the condition of his recognition of us hereafter.* It is not merely that we are "not to be ashamed;" we are to "glory" in him. The recognitions, the "well done" of Heaven, the highest reward. Even here the great triumphs of truth confer honour upon those who have striven for them. 5. *The triumphs of the kingdom of God are not long*

deferred. Some of Christ's hearers lived to see the overthrow of Jerusalem and the universal diffusion of the gospel. The spiritual vision is purified to discern the progress of truth in the world. Those victories which Christian morals and spirituality have already won within the experience of living Christians are an ample and abundant reward.—M.

Ver. 38.—*Ashamed of Jesus and his words.* This warning is evidently called forth by the unholy presumption of Peter, and the wavering of the disciples divined by the penetrating spirit of Christ. He rebukes the spirit of false shame as a heinous offence against himself and his cause.

1. **JESUS AND HIS WORDS AN OCCASION OF FALSE SHAME.** The penalty attaching to unreal or unjustifiable feelings is that, sooner or later, they commit their subject to some egregious folly or inexcusable sin. This is a result of natural law. 1. *Why should men be ashamed of Jesus?* That they can ever be justified in such shame is, of course, impossible. But there are reasons that, human nature being what it is, explain the phenomenon. (1) Their opposition to the spirit and conduct of the world. Fashion, custom, perverted and corrupted religion, the general principles upon which worldly men conduct their affairs, are alike condemned by the gospel. The wisdom, authority, and influence of the world are therefore arrayed against its teachings. The methods of the Divine life are in contradiction to those of the ordinary life of men. It involves humiliation and self-sacrifice. Christ, as the embodiment and central principle of this, is therefore "rejected and despised." (2) The objects and aims of Christ's teaching seemed so remote, and so unsupported by the external evidences to which men are wont to appeal. What sign was there of a coming "kingdom," other than those with which they were already familiar? Never had wickedness appeared so secure and influential, or religion at such a discount. The same causes are at work in all ages; and to-day there are many evidences of the same spirit. 2. *How does this shame manifest itself?* In shrinking from open discipleship. Bringing an eclectic spirit to the teachings of the gospel. Making compromises with fashion, selfish principles, or demoralizing amusements and pursuits, etc. 3. *What renders such conduct peculiarly heinous?* The weakness of the cause of Christ, and the power and reputation of its enemies. Sin had never so lifted itself up against God. It was "a wicked and adulterous generation," and was to crown its apostasy by crucifying the Son of man. At such a critical time every individual had an influence that might affect the issue of the conflict, and gratitude and honour urged him to exercise it. Unbelief was at the root of the shame which many felt.

II. **JESUS AND HIS WORDS JUDGING FALSE SHAME.** 1. *By the fulfilments of prediction.* The destruction of Jerusalem, the sign of the inauguration of the kingdom of God, was at hand. Some of those addressed were to live to see it. And as in major historic events, so in minor ones. Every success attending Christian effort, every verification of Christian doctrine in experience, is a judgment of the unbelief which is ashamed of the gospel. 2. *By exclusion from the blessedness and glory of Christ's advent.* Just when such men have begun to see how unfounded their suspicions and doubts, and how real are the promises of Christ, they are unable to partake of them. They have no fellowships with the redeemed and glorified, are out of place and covered with confusion because of their guilt and folly. A personal element adds poignancy to their shame; they are openly repudiated by him whom all adore and glorify. A simple but terrible and inevitable retaliation, due not to vengeance, but to spiritual laws. The exposure will be overwhelming and absolute.—M.

Ver. 8.—*Christ's beneficence and economy.* I. **CHRIST'S BENEFICENCE.** 1. *It embraces all human wants.* He came to save from sin, but he also delivered men from its manifold effects. The dead were raised, the sick were cured, the hungry were fed. Herein signs were shown of the coming of that heavenly state in which the redeemed hunger no more, and wherein there shall be no more pain. The Church should seek to deal with human necessities as broadly as her Lord did — overlooking neither the temporal nor the spiritual. 2. *It was not exercised as we should have expected.* John the Baptist, "the friend of the Bridegroom," was not delivered from death, yet this crowd of men and women, who were so undeserving, were relieved from:

the pangs of hunger. He is kind to the unthankful and to the unworthy. 3. *It was free from ostentation and from pride.* A plainer, cheaper meal could scarcely have been given than this, of barley loaves and fish. The absence of luxury on this and on other occasions during our Lord's ministry is a rebuke to our self-indulgence. "Feed me with feed convenient for me." As ostentation was avoided, so also was *pride*. Our Lord did not look down with contempt upon the pitifully small provision offered by the disciples—"seven loaves" and "a few small fishes." He did not put these aside and create afresh, as he might have done; but although he needed not to take the loaves, he did take them. Use to the utmost what God has already given you. Do the best you can with what you have. As you use any gift, it will increase as the loaves did which the disciples carried to the multitude. 4. *It was accompanied by devout acknowledgment of God.* Jesus "gave thanks" over this labourer's dinner. God's presence will make the eating of common loaves a sacrament to us. Let us thankfully receive his gifts, and in his name distribute them, that our beneficence may be a humble copy of our Lord's.

II. CHRIST'S ECONOMY. On this occasion, as on that near Bethsaida, the evangelists tell us that the apostles gathered up the remnants of the feast; and, judging from John vi. 12, we may be sure that on both occasions they were obeying their Lord's command. In God's gifts to man there is no waste, except where our ignorance and carelessness misuse them. The leaves of a tree are not mere ornaments, as was once imagined, but are means of nourishment; and when they fall and are driven by the wind into secret resting-places, they still enrich the soil. Not a drop of rain is wasted, fall where it may. Every year we are learning more and more that what was squandered as refuse from factories and sewers was meant by God for use. Science is following in the footsteps of these disciples of Christ. 1. *Economy is needed in regard to the use of our daily food.* This wealthy nation is peculiarly wasteful. Servants use extravagantly anything of which there seems plenty. Artisans are prodigal in expenditure when wages are good. The middle classes and the upper classes are increasingly luxurious. All this was rebuked when Jesus taught his disciples that, although he could multiply food so easily, they were humbly and patiently to take up the fragments. 2. *Economy is called for in the use of all God's gifts.* *Physical strength* we should husband, and not squander. In seeking wealth or honour, many a man lives to repent his disobedience to this law. The whole life is God's. We have no right to force into a few years what he meant to occupy its whole length, but are called upon to work thoughtfully and lawfully. There is a great waste of *mental strength* also going on amongst us. Some books and papers occupy the mind only to debase it. In education we ought to seek for ourselves and others well-trained and well-developed powers, so that nothing may be wanting to our complete manhood when we lay ourselves as living sacrifices on God's altar. *Spiritual sensibility*, also, is wasted when it evaporates in temporary excitement. The engines which make most noise are those which are doing nothing. When steam is up it must be used. So when feeling is aroused it must be turned into activity. 3. *Economy is the more requisite when gifts are diminishing.* At the end of an abundant feast little was left, yet even about it the Lord Jesus was concerned. Gather up what is left of *former religious teaching*, which is too often lost; of *good resolutions*, which have been broken again and again; of *old beliefs*, which have been shattered, and must be rearranged; of *good reputation*, although so little is left; of *opportunities for Christian service*, which may appear slight and casual, but fairly used will multiply and grow.—A. R.

Vers. 22—25.—*The blind man of Bethsaida.* The variety of method adopted by our Lord in his acts of healing finds a striking illustration in the contrast presented between the cure of this blind man and that of Bartimæus. The sight of the latter was instantaneously and perfectly restored, but it was otherwise with the former. If, as we believe, Christ's miracles were symbols of spiritual experiences, we must expect variety in these also; and we see them in the contrast existing between the sudden transformation of a profligate, and the religious life of one who from a child has known the Scriptures, and loved the things that are excellent. For the further elucidation of such truth, consider—

I. THE SUBJECT OF THIS MIRACULOUS CURE. 1. *He was a blind man.* Although light

blazed around him, to him it was as darkness, and objects which appeared to others real and near were unperceived by him. Hence we often, and properly, speak of "moral blindness" or "spiritual blindness," by which we mean, that he who suffers that privation is incapable of discerning the moral or spiritual truths which are obvious to others. And the faculty which he lacks is something distinct from, although not independent of, mental perception. In other words, a man must have brains to understand spiritual truth; but he needs something more—a faculty of soul, to which St. Paul alludes when he says, "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned;" "The god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not." 2. *He was brought by his friends to the Lord.* Unlike him, they could see. They knew better than he did what he lost by his blindness. They could find their way to the place where Jesus was, and see his face. Another blind man could not have led him thither. It becomes parents, teachers, and friends, who are rejoicing in God's light, to bring others by pleading and by prayer to Jesus' feet. 3. *He was willing to confide in the unseen Saviour.* When Jesus took him by the hand, he did not withdraw it. In this wonderful Stranger, of whom he had heard so much, he had implicit confidence. His touch meant a blessing. How often, by our wilfulness and unbelief, we lose what by trustful waiting we might receive!

II. THE METHOD OF THIS MIRACULOUS CURE. 1. *Jesus led him apart.* He wished to have him alone. Separation, secrecy, solitude, often precede the reception of blessing from Christ. He takes us away from the multitude by illness, in worship, etc. 2. *Jesus gave him glimmerings of light* (see ver. 24). He saw slightly and indistinctly. His companions, who had been left at a little distance, appeared to him to be moving, but seemed vague, large, formless, like trees waving in the wind. Perhaps this cure was gradually wrought because the man's faith was weak, and the slight change already experienced would strengthen his expectation, and make him ready for a fuller blessing. It is at least a beautiful type of the gradual illumination of the soul with light. Lydia was an example of this. 3. *Jesus by repeated touch gave him perfect sight* (ver. 25). He leaves nothing incomplete. He is "the Author and the Finisher of faith." The imperfect vision of earth will be followed by the perfect vision of heaven.—A. R.

Vers. 34—38.—*The worldling and the Christian: a contrast.* Our Lord had just foretold his own sufferings, and now he goes on to speak of his requirement—that his disciples should be willing to follow him in the way of the cross. Soon they would be involved in persecution and trials, which they would be unprepared to meet unless they had wholly surrendered themselves to him. He never hid from his disciples what it would cost them to follow him. Again and again, when there were signs of defection on the part of the people, he gave the twelve an opportunity of leaving him if they wished to do so (John vi. 67). Only whole-hearted service is acceptable to our Lord. It seems strange that his definite announcements of his sufferings, death, and resurrection should have been so imperfectly understood by his disciples. This can only be accounted for by the fact that they often took figurative language literally (Matt. xvi. 1; John iv. 33; xi. 12), and literal language figuratively (Matt. xv. 15—17; John vi. 70). In this passage some of the distinguishing points between a worldling and a Christian are suggested, and by them we may test ourselves.

I. THE ONE FOLLOWS THE WORLD, THE OTHER FOLLOWS CHRIST. Our Lord speaks here of following him, *i.e.* doing what he did, going where he went, etc. In any doubtful sphere let us fairly and frankly ask ourselves—Would the Lord be here? He did not confine himself to the synagogue or to the temple, but dwelt in the home at Nazareth, worked at the carpenter's bench, sat at the wedding feast, went out on the lake with the fishermen, etc. In our innocent enjoyments and ordinary work we may still be following him. Suggest occasions on which there is a distinct choice between 'be worldly and the Christ-like.

II. THE ONE INDULGES HIMSELF, THE OTHER DENIES HIMSELF. A complete surrender of will is called for if we would truly serve Christ. Whenever his will points in one way and our inclination points in another, we must deny ourselves. This is an indispensable condition of following. The true denier of self is the true confessor of Christ. Wishes, tastes, and appetites must be restrained and (where obedience to the Lord requires it) denied by a Christian.

III. THE ONE CARES FOR WHAT IS OUTWARD, THE OTHER FOR WHAT IS INWARD. Many desire to "gain the world," and in the attempt use selfish and sinful means, such as the Lord spurned when they were offered to him (Matt. iv. 9). But what seems to us to be "gain" we must learn to "count loss for Christ" (Phil. iii. 7, 8). His disciples cannot be content with the outward show of happiness. Character to them is far more important than circumstances. If the world be gained, nothing is gained; if the soul be lost, everything is lost.

IV. THE ONE SEEKS EASE, THE OTHER RISKS THE LOSS OF IT. We want a test of the different courses which are sometimes presented for our choice. Speaking broadly, two are possible to us, and our use of the one as of the other proclaims what manner of men we are. The worldling asks, "Which is the pleasantest and easiest thing to do?" the Christian asks, "Which is the right thing?" and will choose that, whatever its issues.

V. THE ONE FINDS DEATH A LOSS, THE OTHER A GAIN. Our life reaches far beyond things seen. Death is the grave of earthly pleasures, but it is the gateway of heavenly joys.

VI. THE ONE WILL BE ASHAMED, AND THE OTHER EXALTED, IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT. Christ speaks here of his coming again, "in the glory of his Father," as his Representative in judgment and as the Founder of a new heaven and earth, in which righteousness will dwell. Around him will be "the holy angels"—those servants of God who rejoice over the penitent (Luke xv. 10), who minister to the saints (Heb. i. 14), and who will finally execute the judgments of the Lord (Matt. xiii. 41). Then he who knows us altogether will separate us, according to his unerring judgment of our characters. All will awake, "some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (See also ver. 38.)—A. R.

Vers. 1—21.—*A sign from heaven.* "There was again a great multitude, and they had nothing to eat." Again Jesus had "compassion." Again are the disciples perplexed. "Whence shall one be able to fill these men with bread here in a desert place?" Speedily, of "seven loaves" and "a few small fishes" "about four thousand men, beside women and children, did eat and were filled," and "broken pieces remained over" to the extent of "seven baskets." Jesus left the miracle to give its own teachings—the great work to sink down into their hearts, while that he sought relief and rest, entering into the boat and coming "into the borders of Magadan." Perversely, the Pharisees, now joined by the Sadducees, came tempting him, putting him to the proof, "seeking of him a sign from heaven." They knew not that he had already put them to the proof by the signs already wrought, which, had they had eyes to see, would have led them to believe. He had, without words, proved that the veil was on their hearts. Had they been children of truth, how soon would they have acknowledged the truth! But now, with words, he would carry home to their hearts a conviction of their blindness in presence of spiritual things. "A sign from heaven," would ye? Quick are ye to discern the signs in the reddened sky of the morning or evening. See ye no red "signs of the times"? Do the passing clouds of heaven foretoken storm or calm? and do not the passing incidents of earth in the political or the social sphere, or the sphere of the individual life? Look around. Was it ever so seen in Israel as it is now seen? Your fathers did eat manna in the desert—is it not so now? Are not the words of the prophets finding their exact fulfilment in these hours? Are not "signs" abundant in the healed ones and in the wonderful words? Would ye have "blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke"? Would ye have the sun "turned into darkness . . . the moon into blood"? Verily the sun shall be darkened; verily the sign of blood shall be in the heavens and upon you. Alas! having eyes they saw not, and having ears they heard not. Then "deeply" from the heart of compassion and sorrow a sigh arose mingling with his words of astonishment and inquiry, "Why doth this generation seek a sign?" followed by the stern condemnation, "There shall no sign" such as they desire "be given;" though God's own sign—"the sign"—will not be wanting, nor be unseen by the watchers. Why will men "seek a sign"? Why "cannot" men "discern the signs"—even those which are always the peculiar and appropriate "signs of the times"? The questions admit of one reply, for that age and this, and for every age. The answer is found—

I. In the prevalent spirit of unbelief. The strange closing of the eyes and shutting

of the ears and hardening of the heart. And if the light abound the closed eye cannot see, and if the air be filled with angel-songs, or the voice of the Teacher lade the air with heavenly truth, the closed ear admits it not. And though the hand of the Lord be present, the hardened heart receives not its impress. It is unmoved, untouched.

II. But why do not men believe? Is it that they cannot or that they will not believe? Alas! both. Some cannot because they have not been solely or sufficiently attentive to the Word, from the hearing of which cometh faith, or for a time they labour under the soul-hindering perplexity which some unresolved sceptical difficulty has involved them in. But these, being seekers of the faith, "shall find." They must be patient; for with our partial views of things we cannot suddenly quadruple all our truth with every suggested opinion, or point out the fallacy of that opinion. But some will not believe. In a foolish, even stupid—yea, wicked—resistance of evidence, they shut out the force of conviction; while others are hindered, being "slow of heart to believe," and therefore "foolish men."

III. Moral conditions hinder the power of faith. Jesus showed this when he said, "How can ye believe which receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not?" And the self-seeking and world-loving, the evil and the sensual, the disobedient, and all who have "refused to have God in their knowledge," must gain both an indisposition and an inaptitude of mind to receive God's testimony in that spirit of faith which implies faithfulness to the truth when known. These are the "wicked and adulterous" to whom "no" special "sign shall be given;" for, refusing the many signs that are around, they will not be "persuaded, if one rise from the dead." But to all one "sign" shall "be given"—"a sign which is spoken against," but which remains ever the one "sign" in heaven and in earth and in all "times," "the sign of Jonah the prophet,"—G.

Vers. 14—21.—*Leaven*. After the great miracle of the feeding of the four thousand, Jesus "entered into a boat with his disciples, and came"—for rest, probably—"into the parts of Dalmanutha. And they forgot to take bread." Had not emphasis been laid on their forgetfulness, we might have supposed they had been led to think "one loaf" enough; for if the Master could feed four thousand with seven loaves, surely he could feed twelve men with one! These men were yet but children in understanding, and Jesus, their watchful Guardian, therefore warns them against the spirit of the men who had recently made the strange demand from him for signs—"the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod," "the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." Strangely enough, they think the reference is to "leaven of bread," which must find an explanation in the engrossment of their minds by the astounding miracle they had witnessed. And yet they see not the thing signified. Jesus, by a brief teaching on the two bread-miracles, draws them away from the "leaven of bread" to "the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Is this a lesson for all time? Was the leaven of Herod wholly put out of the house with his name? Do Sadduceeism and Pharisaism still linger amongst men; and are the disciples of Jesus still exposed to their corrupting influence? It is but too true that these questions must be answered by one affirmative. Herod is described as "a frivolous, voluptuous, unprincipled man." His name symbolizes a morally vile life. Readers of the Gospels know well what the word "Pharisee" stands for—"the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." The Sadducees, though less prominent, are not wholly unknown. Their rejection of great truths on no higher authority than their own opinion points at once to the dangerous tampering with revealed truths. These two rivals as schools were one in the evilness of their teaching so aptly alliterated as "unbelieving hypocrisy and hypocritical unbelief." They stood in united opposition to the Lord's Christ. Thus is the Church for all ages warned against evils that threaten the entire strength and the very existence of the life of the Spirit. Those evils are—

I. **HEATHENISH SELF-INDULGENCE.** Faith grows not in a heart given over to self-indulgence. "The Author and Perfecter of our faith" has made demand, in unmistakable terms, of all who would be his disciples: "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Evil self-indulgence saps the strength of all faith. The highest evidence of the truth and authority of Christ's teaching is given to the obedient. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of

God, or whether I speak from myself." Evilness of life puts men out of harmony with the truth; and as all disobedience is a denial of authority, it disposes men to desire that its authority may be questioned: while the continuous acknowledgment of the authority of the truth makes disobedience the more guilty. These "hold down the truth in unrighteousness." This spirit will support the second evil, namely—

II. SADDUCEAN SCEPTICISM. If scepticism were a true spirit of inquiry, or even that sensibility of faith that longs to know, and is eager to defend itself from deceit, it were a healthy guard against childish credulity. But if it become a proud self-sufficiency, a resolute resistance and despal of truths that are apprehended only by faith—truths which by their very nature do not admit of scientific demonstration, or of truths that do not harmonize with preconceived notions—it then stands in the way of all holy and healthy influence from the highest truths that could reach the heart. It is the opposite of the hearing ear, of the childlike teachableness. There is a faith which is wrought in the heart by the truth's own testimony—the belief that "cometh of hearing," the hearing that is hearkening. But yet another danger lies in the path of the followers of Christ. It is—

III. HYPOCRITICAL PRETENTIOUSNESS. Here the truth is acknowledged, but neither the heart nor the life is true to it. It is unfaithfulness, deceit, hypocrisy. It is the vice against which the severest words that escaped the lips of Christ were directed. A "double-minded man is unstable," but a double-faced man is utterly unworthy. He is open to all seductions; he may become the tool of all evil, and all the time hiding the filthiness of his evil heart in a show of righteousness whose deceitfulness reduces it to the lowest grade of evil. Of this leaven all disciples from the earliest hour have been in danger. Even a little may be "hid" in the heart "till all is leavened." To how many of the disciples may it be said to-day, "Do ye not understand?"!—G.

Vers. 22—26.—*The gradual healing of the blind man.* In each of the many cases of healing there were, doubtless, peculiarities of incident of great interest to the healed, if not to us. But of only a few have we the details. Perhaps where we have them they have their more important relation to us than to the subjects of the healing themselves. In this case, as in others, the compassion of friends is called into play. "They bring to him a blind man, and beseech him to touch him." Not without service to us all is this little feature preserved. How may we who have proved his power to heal learn here the duty, the propriety, the encouragement to bring to Jesus, by kindly, leading hands, those who see not their way to him. Gently Jesus took the hand of the blind man in his, and led him away from the crowd, "out of the village"—itself a judgment to this Bethsaida. But oh, how beauteous a picture—Jesus leading the blind! This is itself a homily. Singular to us appear the actions of Christ, both here and elsewhere. But why did he "spit on his eyes"? That he should work gradually and through the medium of outward signs was very becoming, if only to identify himself with the miracle. But who shall tell the thoughts they stirred in the hearts of the healed, for every one of whom Jesus cared! There was no need of spittle even to loosen the gummed eyelids, though such loosening may have been necessary, and needed no wasting of power by the doing it miraculously. Nor was there any absolute need of the touch of the hand; no, nor even at any time of the word. His will was enough. But he who chose to use his word or his touch or his breath here identifies himself with the miracle by the spittle. The progressive character of the work stands in contrast to the somewhat hasty "touch him." As there is no mention of faith (so generally commended where found) on the part of the blind man, it may have been but small, if there were any. Perhaps this may afford some reason why the healing was not instantaneous. It may have responded to the growing faith of the recipient—a seeing far more important even than beholding men and trees. Would no virtue come from the touch of that leading hand? Were no words spoken to awaken faith? Was there a Lydian spirit in the man "whose" eyes "the Lord" so gently "opened"? We may not know. But to us the miracle is a type of many healings in our suffering, blind world, where faith and hope have need to be roused into activity by some measure of healing—some sign. And it may be that here the full trust of that half-hoping heart was gained by the very lingering of the light on the threshold of those half-opened eyes.

“For thou wouldst have us linger still
Upon the verge of good or ill,
That on thy guiding hand unseen
Our undivided hearts may lean.”

Certainly we may learn, in the midst of the variety of the Lord's ways of working: 1. That it may please him to use many means to accomplish that which by a word, a touch, a look—or without—he could instantly effect. 2. That it may equally please him to detain hope till it is made strong by tried faith—the faith that is as severely tried by time as by fire. 3. That it may as truly please him to draw out the heart's love by its sense of dependence upon him. So is it by all those slow but beautiful processes of nature, which are the Lord's hands for ministering to us bread and wine. 4. And most assuredly may we learn not to despise the Lord's work while it is in process. For what seems to us to be but imperfectness of work or tardiness of method, may be his kind and gentle and instructive way of leading us to see things in their perfectness—even “all things clearly.”—G.

Vers. 27—30.—*The confession of Peter.* The brief record of St. Mark leads us to turn to the fuller statements of St. Matthew. Jesus tests the faith of his disciples “as they were able” to bear it. First, “in the way he . . . asked, Who do men say that I am?” What is the general opinion? Then, more closely, “But who say ye that I am?” It was a day of testing. There had been a general blindness. Immediately before he had occasion to say, “O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have no bread? Do ye not yet perceive?” But there was amongst them one discerning spirit; and he who “knew all men” saw the elevation of character, the quick perception, the sympathetic, sensitive soul. “Who say ye?” “Simon”—of whom it had been early said, “Thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter),” which is by interpretation, “Rock,” or “Stone.”—“Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” It is enough. Here is one who, seeing, can see the true character of the Sent of God; not a mere teacher, or rabbi, but the Hope of Israel—the long looked-for Christ, “the Son of the Blessed.” The wise Master-builder stood ready to lay the firm foundation-stones of his enduring Church—“a spiritual house,” built up of “living stones;” and in this first confessor, the first to acknowledge his exalted person and high office, in this man who is a rock, Jesus discerns the suitable stone to lay first on the prepared earth. “Thou,” of whom it was once said, “Thou shalt be,” now “art, Peter: and upon this rock I will build my Church.” Not upon Peter's mere confession; not upon Peter apart from his confession; nor, indeed, upon Peter alone. For the Church of Jesus is not a column, a pillar, of stones. But of those “twelve foundations,” of what afterwards was seen by one of them to be a city, and on which are the “twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb,” this was the first to be laid. Or of that “household of God,” which is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief Corner-stone,” this stone gained the honourable position of being laid immediately next to the corner. The house is spiritual, the stones are spiritual, the total idea is spiritual—every stone is a “living stone.” Here is no dead body of rubbish; but spiritually discerning men, who, like Peter, can discern and confess the Lord's Christ. There need be no hesitation in acknowledging the high position assigned to Peter—the prince, the very primate of the apostles—by his Lord and ours. An immeasurable gulf lies between this and the assumption of the exclusive authority of Peter by Rome. Yea, though the improbability of Peter's ever having visited Rome were exchanged for a certainty that he both visited the city and founded its Church, yet would that claim be baseless. Nor does the putting into his hands “the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” with which, by God's good grace, he opened the gates of the kingdom to Jews and Gentiles, which work, done on earth, was truly confirmed in heaven, give Rome the slightest warrant for her assumption.

I. The first great lesson for every Peter obviously is—TO SEEK A PENETRATIVE DISCERNMENT OF JESUS AS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD. The beholding Jesus, the Son of Mary, as the common eye may, is a primary step. A life so pure, so beneficent, so exalted, justly claims the attention of all. It stands pre-eminently above all. It is out of the common category. But this is not the perfect view. There is

more hidden in the word "Christ;" and this demands a fuller insight. Some, like Nicodemus, acknowledge him to be "a Teacher come from God." But in their view he is only one of many; with whom Homer, and Shakespeare, and Dante, and a thousand others rank as sent of God, and filled with the spirit of wisdom and understanding and all knowledge, like a Bezaleel of old, to work in all manner of work for the building up of an outer temple of God. But he stands alone in Peter's judgment, and in that of all who are "blessed" like Peter, in that the truth is revealed to them not by "flesh and blood," but by the "Father which is in heaven." But even this falls short of the final term: "Thou art . . . the Son of the living God." "God of God, . . . very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father;" he "being the Effulgence of his glory, and the very Image of his substance." Yet let every discerning one acknowledge, "no one knoweth the Son save the Father."

II. A second lesson is for every one who seeth the Son as he is revealed of the Father, TO CONFESS HIM IN PRESENCE OF THE WORLD'S ERROR, SELF-SEEKING, CONFUSION, AND SIN. This each, who having seen Jesus has seen the Father in him, is called to do. And thus shall the kingdom of heaven be opened more and more. Thus shall the great Church be extended, whose inviolable security is pledged to every one who, in the spirit of Peter, can hear and receive the assuring words, "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."—G.

Ver. 31—ch. ix. 1.—*Discipleship*. Having elicited Peter's noble confession, Jesus puts the disciples to further proof by declaring that "the Son of man"—his own lowly title, contrasting so strangely with Peter's word—must "suffer," "and be rejected," "and be killed," "and after three days rise again." And this was said in no enigmatical or hidden way, but "openly." Whereupon the weaker side of Peter's character obtruded itself: he "took him and began to rebuke him." The Messianic hopes which had been expressed by the confession, and confirmed by the Lord's testimony to that confession, were contradicted, if not dashed to the ground, by the suggestion of a suffering and conquered Christ. "This shall never be unto thee." Now does Peter need correction. The strong word of which shows how good and bad may mingle in our present imperfectness. The great proto-confessor denies his Lord by denying the true spirit to Christ, and by opposing his earthly to the heavenly method of conquest—"the things of men" to "the things of God." In the yet imperfect heart, though, indeed, taught of God, this would be a prevailing of the "gates of Hades." Therefore we must say, "Be it far from thee, Lord." In presence of the disciples, for their instruction, as for Peter's correction, the Lord utters his displeasure in the strongest terms—terms quite sufficient to prevent any boasting on account of the previous honourable distinction. "Get thee behind me, Satan." So near the words spoken "to the evil one," "Get thee hence, Satan." One only word is needed to add to this by way of explication, "Thou art a stumbling-block to me;" and another word by way of application, "For thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." Is it so, then, that "the things of men" stand in direct contradiction to "the things of God"? That which is purely "of men" do; and all that is not "of God" is of the adversary, "Satan," and must be silenced. That silencing is effected by words which have ever since appeared as in letters of fire over the gate of entrance to discipleship. And "the multitude" is "called" together to hear them. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." How simple, yet how comprehensive! how easy, and yet how difficult, is this tri-unity of duty! In its simplest presentation it is: 1. *A thorough, complete, continuous, self-denial*. 2. *A patient endurance*. 3. *A diligent obedience*. "With men this is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God."

I. It was not only during the early struggles of the Church of Christ, or merely in its conflict with the anti-Christian world, that the disciple must needs "deny himself." It is the groundwork of all discipleship, and finds its necessity in the natural revulsion from the duties, the restraints, and the discipline of the gospel. That it should be more needful to urge the necessity for a total self-abnegation in the midst of an unfriendly, antagonistic worldly power, is obvious. But a spirit of self-indulgence is wholly removed from the idea of the disciple of Jesus. The habitual refusal to hearken to the appeals of the sinful self when those appeals contradict the voice of conscience,

the inward echo of Christ's outward voice, is a rule allowing of no relaxation, even under the most favourable religious influences. The true idea of the disciple suggests the absolute, unconditional self-surrender—the whole life laid at the feet of the Master.

II. The subsequent words point to a buying of the life at the expense of the life. A paradox designed to awaken thought, and that finds its solution in the dual character of life. The outward and visible, the inward and spiritual; the life temporal, and the life eternal. In Jesus' view a man might suffer, be rejected of men, be killed, and yet truly "save his life" and "find it;" while, on the other hand, a man might save his life from the toils, the sacrifices, the self-inflictions and self-denials which discipleship would require, from the cruelties of men, from the death which human hands could inflict, and yet "lose his life"—lose life in the truest, highest, best, and therefore only real sense. Jesus saw that, so far from losing all, a man might gain all—all the world could give him—the "whole world" itself; yet all this might be at the forfeiture of the life. And if he forfeit his life, "what shall a man give in exchange for" it again? Once forfeited, it is forfeited for ever. There is no possibility of returning to regain it. Well were it, therefore, for his disciples to carry a cross daily, a symbol of dying to self, to sin, and the world, and in the patient endurance of that self-inflicted death to find the true life—the life in Christ, the life in the region of righteousness, and the pledge of a being "raised up" to life everlasting. Before the words were formulated, the disciples of Jesus attained the high estate, "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and," with a reaching far and forward, "that life which I now live in the flesh, I live in faith."

III. It was in this spirit of unflinching obedience—even to a hard, self-restraining, self-denying, and self-crucifying rule—that the disciple was, with his far-reaching and fore-reaching vision, to "live in faith," anticipating the time when "the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and render unto every man according to his deeds." After these hard sayings with which Jesus had shaken the hearts of the disciples, and proclaimed to the "great multitude" the severity of his rule, he comfortingly assures them of the nearness of his kingdom, by declaring "some of them" should "in no wise taste of death" till they had seen it "come with power."—G.

Vers. 1—10.—*Compassion for the many.* I. CHRIST'S COMPASSION FOR THE MANY CONTRASTED WITH THE NARROW HEARTS OF THE DISCIPLES. 1. Narrow hearts often are caused by narrow means. Alas! grinding poverty makes even naturally kind hearts indifferent to others' sufferings. Where there is "little to earn and many to keep," this will be so. There are circumstances in which the whole kindly current of the man's being is frozen, and he becomes utterly egotistic. 2. The Divine heart is of boundless compassion. All those ancient pictures of God as unwearied and unworn after all his creative activity, may be used of his redemptive activity. There is no exhausting the Divine intelligence, no draining the resources of the Divine heart.

II. CHRIST'S ACTION ON THIS OCCASION A PARABLE OF THE CALL OF THE GENTILES. The present feeding of the multitude differs from the former; the numbers given are different. Again, the present work was done after a long journey in heathen lands. "The one miracle was chiefly, if not entirely, for Jews; the other chiefly, if not entirely, for Gentiles. The feeding of the five thousand was an exceptional miracle, which Jesus had refused to repeat on behalf of Jews. It was therefore quite natural that the apostles should not at once receive the intimation of Jesus respecting what he was willing to do for the multitude. They spoke only of their own inability to supply the wants of the people; but they did not forget what he had done a few weeks before. There were only a few miraculous cures for the Gentiles, while those for the Jews were innumerable; and it might therefore be doubted if Jesus would now do for Gentiles what he had only once done for Jews" (J. H. Godwin). The Divine compassion and love exceed our noblest and largest thoughts, and are extended alike to all peoples.—J.

Vers. 11—21.—*Craving for signs.* I. WHENCE THE CRAVING SPRINGS. "The Jews seek after a sign." It is the spirit we nowadays term "sensationalism." It is a natural desire for a certain pleasure of the mind. Fixed ideas, a sameness of mental

representations, wearies and saddens the mind. Hence the craving for amusement, which gives change to the perpetual march past of the same old thoughts. The feeling is natural enough. The Jews, who had no science in our sense, and did not live in an interesting age like ours, wanted signs and wonders to amuse. We can understand the feeling, and allow it to be natural, but at the same time not religious.

II. CHRIST REFUSES TO FOSTER SENSATIONALISM. 1. *The form of denial and refusal is very strong and emphatic indeed.* (Ver. 12.) Signs will be given to those who are ready to profit by them, not to gratify idle curiosity. How severely does Christ discountenance "sensationalism" in connection with his religion! He will have as little noise, as little rumour, finger-pointing, gaping of vacant crowd, as possible. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." 2. *Besides, an express warning is given:* against "the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod." This means much the same as the Pharisees and Sadducees, apparently. The political Herodians were many of them Sadducees. Again, the Pharisees and Sadducees had a certain common basis of teaching. Both were at once in opposition to Jesus and the aims of his kingdom. The Pharisees, strongly conservatives of Judaism, would disparage Jesus and his works. The other party would object to any "kingdom of heaven," acknowledging only the Roman empire. The "leaven" means both the teaching and the spirit of it (cf. Matt. xvi. 12; Luke xii. 1).

III. THE UNSPIRITUAL MIND CONSTANTLY MISUNDERSTOOD HIM. The disciples stuck at the word "leaven"—leaven-loaves. "We forgot to bring provisions with us!" The error was double. They caught at the sound instead of the sense. And they showed forgetfulness of the miracle they had so recently witnessed. "How is it that you do not consider?" Christ is just as much misunderstood to-day as he was then. We forget the spirit of Christianity; we blunder over its meaning. He says to us to-day, "How is it that you do not consider?" "Moral evidence is most profitable and proper for religious truth. Lower proof is desired when higher is disregarded and despised. Forgetfulness of the past occasions needless anxiety for the future" (J. H. Godwin).—J.

Vers. 22—26.—*The blind man.* I. "THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST AWAKENS FAITH IN THOSE WHO ARE BROUGHT TO HIM BY THE FAITH OF OTHERS."

II. "BENEFITS ARE RECEIVED ACCORDING TO THE MEASURE OF FAITH IN HIM" (J. H. Godwin).—J.

Vers. 27—30.—*Jesus the Messiah.* I. SOME MISTAKEN IDENTIFICATIONS OF JESUS. John Baptist; Elijah; a prophet; Jeremiah, according to Matthew. There was some truth here. They recognized the prophetic inspiration and power of Jesus. Truth in feeling, error in thought; Jesus was the greatest of the prophets, not reproducing his predecessors, but going beyond them. God hath spoken by his Son (Heb. i.).

II. A TRUE IDENTIFICATION. Peter's, "Thou art the Messiah," i.e. the Anointed of God (cf. Matt. xvi. 13—20). The Messiah includes Prophet, Priest, and King within his person and functions.

III. THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE IDENTIFICATION BY JESUS. 1. It is implicitly accepted here, as explicitly in Matt. xvi. Jesus claims to be Prince and Saviour of his people and mankind. 2. Yet it must not be made known. Probably the statement, "The Prophet Jesus is the Messiah," noised abroad, would have produced a false impression. When by his death all hopes of an earthly kingdom had been destroyed, it would not be so. "Only with a knowledge of his character would the statement at any time be beneficial; and from this it would receive the best and surest confirmation" (J. H. Godwin).—J.

Vers. 31—38.—*Unwelcome prophecies.* I. PLAIN TRUTHS SELDOM WELCOME. He now spoke of suffering, rejection, even murder, at the hands of a conspiracy. The veil was drawn aside; at last it was seen what the Messiahship of Jesus meant. The same thing had before been expressed parabolically (John ii. 19; iii. 14; vi. 51).

II. THE FLATTERY OF FRIENDSHIP. The honest-hearted Peter is endeared to us. He is so human; his feelings always on the right side, his intelligence often confused. How true his heart here! how wrong his thought! Suffering and death seem an evil

to him, as to most of us. Not so to Christ. The mere suggestion that the real is to be preferred to the ideal, mere life to duty, self-interest to the kingdom of God, he spurns from him as the suggestion of a dark spirit.

III. SELF-RENUNCIATION. "Let him renounce himself!" says Christ to the recruit for his army, the would-be citizen of his kingdom. Deep words: the meaning behind them it requires a life to learn. 1. The resolve of egotism *must* end in failure. To *determine* to save one's life is to cast it away; to cast away one's life for the sake of the ideal is to save it. Christianity is the kingdom of the ideal. 2. In the spiritual sphere there is no real loss. Life is one, and is *not* "in the abundance of the things possessed." It cannot be "priced," nor bartered away. It is the man's *very self*. 3. To disavow our ideal is to incur eternal shame. There are the ideals of comfort, of luxury; the ideals of society; the ideals of God, of the spirit. We must take our choice. We *may* make a choice of the lower which shall exclude the higher, or of the higher which shall *include* all of worth in the lower. There is no other rule than "Seek first the kingdom of God!" If we are ashamed to be true to our ideal, the time will come when we shall be put to shame in the presence of it. To disavow greatness when it comes to us under the guise of obscurity, this is to ensure our being disavowed of greatness when it appears in its true and heavenly glory.—J.

Vers. 1—21. Parallel passage: Matt. xv. 30—xvi. 12.—1. *The feeding of the four thousand.* 2. *The sign sought by the Pharisees.* 3. *The leaven of the Pharisees.* I. OMISSION. Having pretty fully considered the feeding of the five thousand recorded in the sixth chapter, and its relation to the feeding of the four thousand narrated in the above section of this eighth chapter, we waive further notice of this subject, as the two miracles are in fact twin miracles, having much in common, and many circumstances so similar that, as we saw, some erroneously identified them. We may add, however, that on the former occasion the northern villagers would have made Jesus a king; the dwellers on the eastern shores make no demonstration. Further, the five thousand were fed after the return of the twelve; the four thousand after our Lord's return from the borders of Tyre and Sidon. In the former case, the disciples went away by sea and Christ retired to the mountain, but met them again at the fourth watch, as he walked upon the waters. On the present occasion the multitude had been with Jesus three days, and afterwards he departed with the disciples in the ship.

II. THE PHARISEES. At this juncture they had made common cause with their bitter opponents, the Sadducees; both together made a combined and desperate attack on our Lord. He seems to have avoided Bethsaida and Capernaum, which were further north, and to have landed near Magdala, now *El-Mejdel*, in the neighbourhood and about three miles to the north of which was Dalmanutha, on purpose, it would seem, to escape from those inveterate enemies who appear to have made Capernaum or Bethsaida their head-quarters. Consequently they were under the necessity of coming in quest of him; for they "came forth, and began to question with him." Their ostensible object on this occasion was to seek of him a sign from heaven, but their real design was, in all likelihood, to entrap him. They were insincere as well as sceptical; and, had the sought-for sign been granted, it would not have overcome their deeply rooted prejudices and hypocritical pretences. The conduct of these wretched men was suicidal. Their curiosity craved a sign; their unbelief unfitted them for its performance, as also for its proper perception had it been performed. Besides, had there not been many signs? Had not a multitude of the angelic host celebrated Christ's birth on the plains of Bethlehem? Had there not been the reception by Simeon, and the response of Anna at his presentation in the temple? Had not the star appeared in the East? Had not the Magi followed its guidance to worship the infant Saviour and to present their gifts? Had not an audible voice from heaven acknowledged him at his baptism, it did as on two subsequent occasions? Had not the Spirit, in visible, dove-like form, descended upon him? Thus in the temple two pious Jews expressed their grateful acknowledgments and recorded their joy, confessing their Lord. Soon after, Gentile Magi, men of scientific knowledge and literary pursuits, came from a far-off Eastern land to pay their homage. Here we have at once Hebrew piety and Gentile philosophy uniting to do honour to the infant Saviour, and bow in humility at his feet. Here, too, we have male and female—that godly old man Simeon and that holy, aged woman Anna repre-

senting their respective sexes in owning his Messiahship. So afterwards, on his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when the crowd that went before and the crowd that followed after had cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!" the children in the temple responded, saying in the selfsame strain, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Old and young, male and female, Gentile and Jew, thus unite their tribute to that Saviour whose mercy they need, whose grace they share, by whose work they are benefited, and in whose salvation they participate. But not so these captious, sceptical, false-hearted, and malignant Pharisees. On three other occasions we read of a sign being demanded—after the cleansing of the temple, the journey through the corn-fields, the feeding of the five thousand; so also on the occasion mentioned here. What was the nature of the sign for which they clamoured? The signs they sought were marvels of a garish kind—appearances in the sky, such as manna coming down from heaven, as they themselves intimated in John vi.; or the standing still of the sun and moon, or the sudden descent of thunder and hail, or some change of the atmosphere, as Theophylact suggests; or the calling down of fire and rain, or the receding of the sun's shadow on the dial, or some great, overmastering, and stupendous miracle. "They thought," says Theophylact, "he could not perform a sign from heaven, as one who in league with Beelzebub could only perform signs on earth." But had they not seen even greater signs than these? And, had they been favoured with the signs of their own choosing, would they have been satisfied? There is no reason to believe they would. Our Lord, however, never gratified an idle curiosity, nor wrought a miracle to create wonder, but usually to supply some want or relieve some necessity.

III. THE DISCIPLES' WANT OF SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT. Our Lord, as we have seen, had to contend with the hostility of the Pharisees, their stubborn disbelief and ensnaring captiousness. In view of these, and of the subtlety of the temptation which claimed a miracle to prove his Messiahship, as also perhaps of the crisis that was hurrying on, there welled up from the depths of his heart that sigh of mingled patience and pity. But he had more to contend with than Pharisaic opposition and disbelief; he had the perverseness of his own disciples. If he had the stolid stubbornness of the Pharisees to encounter on the one hand, he had the stupidity of his own disciples to oppose on the other. On the one side there was sullen scepticism, on the other sad slowness of heart; on the one malignant forwardness, on the other wayward misconception. How often is the disciple of Christ similarly situated! He meets with open enmity on the part of godless, Christless men, while unaccountably he finds obstacles thrown in his way by the professed friends of truth. If foes are bitter in their opposition, friends sometimes fail to render the expected and much-needed support—often, however, more from want of thought than want of will. But when distressed and depressed, what by fightings without and fears within, we have the example of our Lord to encourage us and keep us from desponding. If such things were done in a green tree, what may we not expect to be done in a dry?

IV. MEANING OF THE WARNING AGAINST THE LEAVEN. Our Lord broke off his interview with these hypocritical Pharisees abruptly, and re-embarked rather hurriedly. He abandoned them in their unbelief, renouncing and rejecting them as impracticable malignants. The disciples, whose duty it was to provide for their own and Master's wants, had somehow overlooked or neglected the duty that thus devolved on them. Either, owing to their hasty re-embarkation, they had forgotten (*ἐπελθόντες* being used in a pluperfect sense) to provide bread before starting—a strange oversight after having collected seven large baskets (*στυπιδας*) full of fragments; or, after landing, and when they had come to the other side, they forgot (*ἐπελθόντες* having the ordinary past signification of the aorist) to take bread for their land-journey further, though they had had only one loaf with them in the ship. Our Lord, as usual, improving the occasion, and intending to guard his disciples from the subtle, insinuating errors and example of the Pharisees, warned them against their plausible but pernicious teaching, and in doing so he employed terms, as was his custom, suggested by recent occurrences. "Take heed, beware," he said, "of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod;" or, as Meyer understands the word (*βλέπετε*), "Take heed, turn your eyes away from the leaven of the Pharisees, and from the leaven of Herod;" or, as St. Matthew has it, from "the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees," so that Herod, from his Sau-

duceism, may here, by way of eminence, represent that sect. Leaven, with the single exception of the parable of the leaven, is always used for evil of some sort, especially evil secretly working and silently diffusing itself; and hence, in preparation for the Passover, leaven was to be purged out of all the households of the Hebrews. Accordingly the leaven of the Pharisees, if used here in a specific and not in a generic sense, may be taken to denote *hypocrisy*, while the leaven of the Sadducees may signify *misbelief*, and that of Herod *worldliness*; and as the Sadducean creed allows full scope to worldly pleasures and pursuits, and because of their many points of contact, the two latter may coincide or change places; while the whole three are animated by one and the same spirit of opposition to God and true religion. Our Lord here warned his disciples against all doctrine, practice, or teaching of like character under the name of leaven. His disciples, in their low, grovelling notions, and through their slowness of spiritual apprehension, understood him to speak of bread in the literal sense, and of bread baked with leaven got from the Pharisees on landing. They supposed that the Saviour was warning them against anything of that kind that might corrupt them. How different the Master and the disciples! The latter allowed their thoughts to be too much engrossed with the bread that perisheth; the former had his mind occupied with the bread that endureth unto eternal life, and warned them against any teaching or any practice that might interfere with their possessing it. No wonder our Lord was somewhat sharp in his rebuke of their spiritual dulness, for, having eyes for the physical part of the miracles, they failed to see their spiritual import. They had eyesight only for the outward shell, but did not perceive the kernel. Hence it is that he inquires, "Having ears, hear ye not?" and again, "How is it that ye do not understand?"

V. EXEGETICAL NOTE ON CERTAIN WORDS AND PHRASES IN THE PRECEDING SECTIONS.

1. The clause, "They have now been with me three days," is literally, *There are now three days to them remaining with me*. To the original expression thus exactly rendered has been cited the following parallel from the 'Philoctetes' of Sophocles:—*Ἦν δ' ἡμᾶρ ἡδὴ δευτέρον πλέοντι μοι*: "It was now the second day to me sailing." 2. Instead of *ἐν ἐρημῳ* of St. Matthew, we have here in St. Mark *ἐν ἐρημίᾳ*, which is slightly different in sense, meaning, "In circumstances consequent on or connected with being in a desert." 3. In ver. 12 the received text reads *ἐνίχηται*, which yields a very suitable sense, namely, seeks a sign *in addition* to those already given. The critical editors, Lachmann, Tischendorf, and Tregelles, however, read the simpler verb *χηται*. 4. In this same verse there is a Hebraistic form of strong abjuration. The clause in our English Version is, "There shall no sign be given;" so also the Syriac has simply "*not*;" but the strict rendering is, "If a sign shall be given," which, resolved according to the idiom of the original, is, "May I not live if a sign shall be given," or "God do so to me and more if a sign shall be given." 5. So also in the same verse, "*he brake*," that is, at once, because the verb is the aorist tense; and "kept giving," as the verb is imperfect. 6. The two participles meaning respectively "having given thanks" and "blessed" amount to nearly the same thing, and set us an example suitable, seemly, and seasonable of thanking God and asking his blessing when we partake of our daily food; in other words, of conforming to the time-honoured practice of saying "grace," as it is called, before meals, by which we thankfully acknowledge the Giver, and ask his blessing on and with the gift.—J. J. G.

Vers. 22-26.—*The healing of a blind man at Bethsaida*. I. SEVERAL MIRACLES OF A SIMILAR KIND. The miracle here recorded was performed at Bethsaida Julius, or the northern Bethsaida, on the route from the north-east shore of the lake to Cæsarea Philippi. It is related by St. Mark alone. The peculiarity of this miracle of restoring sight to the blind is the circumstance of its being wrought at twice; that is to say, the cure was progressive or gradual. In the ninth chapter of St. John's Gospel we have the account of a like miracle of opening the eyes of a blind man; but one peculiarity of the miracle there recorded consists in the fact that the man on whom the miracle was performed had been born blind. There is again the opening of the eyes of two blind men near Jericho, recorded in St. Matthew (xx.), one of whom only is mentioned by St. Mark (x.) and by St. Luke (xviii.), and called by the patronymic Bartimæus, or the son of Timæus. There is also the record of another similar miracle in the ninth chapter of St. Matthew, when our Lord, after putting their faith to the

test, cured two blind men in the house whither they had followed him. Besides these specially recorded cases, we have several references of a general kind to our Lord's healing of the blind. The great number of instances of this kind is accounted for by the fact that blindness is a disease much more common in the East than in the lands of the West, while several causes have been assigned for that prevalence, such as the small particles of dust and sand impinging on the eye, and persons sleeping in the open air at night.

II. THE CONDITION OF THIS MAN. This man was blind, but, as we shall see, he had not been born blind—he was not blind from birth. He had become blind from accident or disease. At all events, he was destitute of that most valuable sense, the sense of sight. He had been long a stranger to the beauties of nature. "The light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to see the sun;" but that sun, that light, those beauties, those bright colours, those lovely forms that appear in the heaven above, in the earth beneath, in the waters round the earth—all, all had long been to him a blank. He was in that state which Milton, in the days of his blindness, so poetically and pathetically depletes—

"Thus with the year
Seasons return; but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
But cloud instead and ever-during dark
Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
Cut off, and, for the book of knowledge fair,
Presented with a universal blank
Of nature's works, to me expunged and rased,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out."

We know not whether this blind man had wife or child. It is probable he had; and, if so, when he rose in the morning his wife ministered unto him, his children clung to his knees and kissed him while he blessed them. They led him forth to the street or elsewhere out of doors. He could feel them, but could not behold them. Their smiles, their tears, their bright eyes, and sweet faces were to him unknown and by him unseen. All the region round Bethsaida was charming—the glancing waters of the lake, the lovely flowers of the Galilean hills, were a sight worth seeing; but what were all these to this blind man? The district might as well have been dark and dismal, bleak and black; at any rate, a blank, a night without moon or star, midnight with its darkness visible, even "darkness that might be felt."

III. PECULIARITY IN THE MODE OF CURE. Here the peculiarity is twofold: 1. Jesus took him by the hand and led him out of the town. 2. The cure was effected progressively, or at twice. What reason can we assign for the *former* peculiarity? Why did he conduct him outside the town? Several reasons have been assigned. Some say that our Lord thereby meant to intimate the unworthiness, through unbelief, of the inhabitants of this town, or rather village (*κῆμα*), and his consequent dissatisfaction with them; this, of course, is a mere conjecture. Others suppose, with more apparent reason, that, as the process of cure in this case was more than usually protracted, our Lord led the man out of the town in order to be free from interruption or any obstruction on the part of the crowd, just as in the preceding chapter he is said to have taken the deaf mute aside from the multitude. Bengel, with his usual ingenuity, conjectures the cause to be the Saviour's intention that, when the blind recovered sight, his eyes might rest on the more cheerful aspect of the sky and of the works of God in nature—that is, in the country—than of the works of man in the town. The thought is a beautiful one, but only the product of a fertile imagination. Of two remaining reasons, which have been suggested with considerable plausibility, one is the avoidance of witnesses on account of the somewhat disagreeable application of spittle, or saliva, to the person of the invalid, exactly as in the case of the deaf mute already referred to; and the other is that our Lord, by varying the mode of cure, "sometimes doing more, sometimes less, and sometimes nothing," signified his freedom from any fixed form of gesture or manipulation. Some, again, reject with regard to the saliva all these, holding that our Lord meant to graft the supernatural on the natural, the saliva being an

ordinary medical application in such cases. We are rather inclined to adopt the view of variation, for the purpose of proving independence of any specific or stereotyped mode in such miraculous performance. With respect to the *progressiveness* of the cure a similar diversity of opinion prevails. Theophylact attributes it to the imperfect faith of the blind man himself, and of those who brought him to the Saviour; others imagine that on a sudden recovery of sight the man would have been unable to distinguish objects from each other. But to this latter, which proceeds on the assumption of his being born blind, it is sufficient to reply (1) that this man had not been born blind, as is implied in the word ἀποκατεστάθη—he was restored to or reinstated in his once normal condition; and (2) he was able to discriminate trees from men, so that he must have seen both before this blindness supervened. Before Berkeley's time visual distance was traced to an original law of our constitution, and considered an original perception; but the bishop proved, as is very generally admitted, that our information on this subject of the distance of objects is acquired by experience and association; while, if we judge of the distance of objects solely from the visible impressions on the retina, we fall into great mistakes. The case, too, of Cheselden, who had been born blind, appeared to confirm the theory of Berkeley, for when couched he at first had no correct notions of distances, but supposed all objects to touch and to be in close contact with the eye. It was gradually he corrected his visible by his tangible impressions, and gained a correct understanding of the situation of the objects that surrounded him, as well as of their shape and size. Had the blind man in this passage been thus born blind, we could readily concede the necessity of a gradual operation—first to get his eyes opened, and secondly to gain correct notions of the objects about him. No gradual miracle of this sort was required in the case of this man, because he had originally possessed the sense of sight and lost it. The true cause appears to be either an evidence on the part of the Saviour that he is not tied down to any particular mode of operation, but manifests his mercy in divers manners, according to his sovereign good pleasure; or, if this theory be not accepted, the cause may be assigned to the symbolic nature of the miracle, as exhibiting the gradual recovery of spiritual eyesight, the removal of spiritual blindness being, for the most part and with some rare exceptions, gradual and progressive.

IV. EXPLANATION OF TERMS WITH DIFFERENCES OF READING. 1. Our Lord led the blind man out, having taken him by the hand, which is a very expressive action, for it is a guide which the blind, whether physically or spiritually, so much need; and this is just the kind of guide here mentioned—a Divine and therefore infallible Guide. This guidance is expressed in the received text by ἐξήγαγεν, though some critical editors prefer ἐξήνεγκεν, equivalent to “conveyed out;” while in both the phrase “out of” is strongly expressed by the preposition in composition with the verb and the separate ἐξω. 2. The reading of the common text is properly rendered, “I see men as trees, walking;” that is to say, he saw men, but so indistinctly and at first apparently motionless, that they seemed more like trees; but then he saw them walking, and so discriminated them from trees. The expression is rather abrupt, but most accurate in describing the three stages indicated. The reading of the critical editions is different, and is rightly represented by the following rendering:—“I behold men, because as trees I see [them] walking.” Even according to this reading the expression is abrupt, as significant of sudden and joyful surprise; as if he said, “I see men not much differing in shape and form from trees; but I know they are men, and not trees, for I see them in motion.” 3. Succeeding this is the expression, he “made him look up,” not “see again”—a signification of the word quite admissible, yet not in accord with the sense here; but for this whole phrase Tischendorf Tregelles and Alford read διέβλεψεν, “he saw clearly,” that very instant (aorist); then, after restoration, he saw all things or all persons plainly—rather, continued looking on (ἐνέβλεπεν, imperfect, instead of ἐνέβλεψε, aorist) all things with clear vision. 4. The word τηλαυγῶς, from τῆλε, at a distance, and αὐγή, equivalent to “bright light,” “radiance,” and in the plural “beams of the sun,” signifies generally “far-shining” or “far-seen;” but here, from shining in the distance, “far-sightedly,” “clearly,” “plainly.” 5. An important distinction is made between ὄμμα and ὀφθαλμός; in this passage, the latter being the organ of sight, and as such used by prose-writers, the former or more poetic word being here the sense or inner power of seeing; and so the latter is the instrument employed by the former.

V. The spitting and the application of the hands denote, according to Theophylact,

word and work; they rather denote—the former the virtue proceeding from the Saviour, which restored the extinct sense of sight, the latter the rectification of the organ. Just as in the case of the person born blind, who was couched for blindness, the recovery here also was gradual; so with the spiritually blind we proceed gradually from one degree of light to another, from grace to grace, and from strength to strength. When the spiritually blind recover sight, they discern many things before shrouded in darkness, but not all things, nor even those many things with perfect clearness, or in their correct relations or relative proportions. We need the hand of Jesus to touch our eyes many a time before our spiritual eyesight is perfected; that sight, by the gentle touch of our loving, living Saviour, goes on improving till our dying day. We are in the hand of our Saviour just as this blind man; and as he led him forth, fully restored his sight, and sent him away from his old associations, so we must give ourselves up to his guidance, depend on him entirely for full restoration of sight and other spiritual powers, turn our back on old sinful courses or companions, and go with our Lord whithersoever he leads us. The following context exemplifies the gradual recovery of spiritual sight in those who identified Jesus with John, or Elias, or a prophet, and in the disciples who acknowledged him to be the Christ. The former had a glimmering of the truth; the latter saw its full-orbed clearness. The former only saw “men like trees, walking;” the latter saw it in this particular with perfect plainness.—J. J. G.

Vers. 27—34. Parallel passages: Matt xvi. 13—24; Luke ix. 18—23.—*Christ's prediction of his death and rebuke of Peter.* This section will be considered in connection with a like prediction in the following (ninth) chapter of this Gospel.—J. J. G.

Vers. 35—38. Parallel passages: Matt. xvi. 25—27; Luke ix. 24—26.—*Secular profit and spiritual loss.* 1. A CURIOUS CALCULATION. These verses present themselves in the light of an arithmetical calculation regarding profit and loss—a calculation as important as it is curious. In this calculation the soul is on one side, and the world on the other; secular matters on the one hand, spiritual concerns on the other. A calculation of this sort involves a difficulty, for there is no common standard to which we can bring things so different in their nature. There is no common measure by which we can simplify their comparison, and so better gauge their real relative proportions. They have no common factor; they stand prime to each other. But perhaps it were better to regard these verses as an allusion, not so much to a bare arithmetical calculation, as to a practical mercantile reckoning. It is customary with merchants and others, at some particular period of the year, to look into their books and see how they stand with the world, and how the world stands with them—to balance their accounts, ascertaining their profits and determining their losses. Now, the course thus pursued in secular may with still greater advantage be adopted in spiritual concerns, while the adoption of some such course seems suggested by the inquiry, “What shall it profit a man?”

II. SUPPOSED PROFIT. The supposed profit is here set forth to the greatest advantage. The supposed gain is the very maximum—the greatest possible. It is, in fact, much greater than any man has ever reached. That any one individual should gain the whole world is quite improbable—nay, it is almost, if not altogether, impossible. No man has ever gained so much, no man is ever likely to do so; no man nowadays ever dreams of such a thing. We read, indeed, of one in ancient times that made an approximation to it. We are informed that Alexander the Great subjected the surrounding hostile tribes to the arms of Macedon; conquered the provinces of Asia Minor, deciding the empire of all Asia in three great battles at Granicus, Issus, and Arbela; received the submission of Italian, Scythian, Kelt, and Iberian ambassadors; penetrated to the furthest limit northward, and overthrew the Scythians on the banks of the Jaxartis; pushed his victories far eastward, even to the Hyphasis or Sutlej; founded cities and planted colonies in the Punjab. And when at that point his progress was checked by the murmuring of his troops, and he was obliged to retreat to the Hydaspes or Jhelum, he built a fleet, sailed down the Indus to its mouth, and there, standing in view of the Indian Ocean, and feeling he had arrived at the limit of his career, tears filled his eyes, and he wept because his victories were at an end, and there was no more for him to subdue—“no other world,” say the old historians, “for

him to conquer." But, if we examine the matter with any degree of accuracy, we shall find that this bold adventurer overran only a few countries of the then known world, and but a very inconsiderable portion of those immense continents and many islands which modern geographical discovery has added to the present huge dimensions of the globe. We have all heard of another in modern times who grasped at the sceptre of universal empire, who rose rapidly from a lieutenant of artillery to captain, and from captain to colonel, and from colonel to general of division. Soon he became first consul for ten years, then for life, and afterwards ascended the imperial throne. The empire of France he increased by one-third; but what was that to the high-vaulting ambition of Napoleon? He must needs reign supreme and without a rival in Europe, and in prosecution of that gigantic scheme of conquest he actually added to his empire Italy, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Hanover, the Hanse towns. He seized on Spain and Portugal, and set his kinsmen on foreign thrones. He sought Russia, but above all he sighed for England. He pounced on Egypt; thence, as the most potent point of attack, he fixed his eye on India. India once gained, the world, he thought, would be laid subject at his feet, and he its one and sole possessor. This, doubtless, would have been the result of its successful invasion. But the tide of fortune ceased to flow. To his failure in Spain succeeded his retreat from Moscow, next his defeat at Leipzig, then his banishment to Elba, and, last of all, his final and fearful overthrow on the plains of Waterloo. No one individual has ever yet attained to the possession of the world; no one has advanced beyond a distant approximation to it. But let us for a moment fancy the supposition to have become an accomplished fact. Let us suppose the wide empire of earth in the hands of one man; let us take for granted that the possession of the world—the whole world—is realized by a single individual; let us imagine all the benefits of that vast dominion—its conveniences and comforts, its riches and honours, its pleasures, praises, and profits, all at the command of one man.

III. THE DURATION OF SUCH PROFIT BRIEF. What then would be the continuance of such? Why, he would find it impossible to retain it for any considerable length of time. We cannot calculate with certainty on the continuance of any worldly possession during the whole of life; we cannot reckon on its lasting for even a few years of that life in advance; and, even if we could, we are not sure of life itself for a single moment. "Life is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away;" "There is but a step between us and death;" "This night the soul may be required." There is no permanence of possession upon earth; there is no fixity of tenure here below. The heirloom handed down from father to son, and again from son to father, shall pass into strangers' hands. The hereditary estate, secure it as you may by deeds and settlements, will soon, notwithstanding all your caution, change proprietorship. The baronial residence will in time become a ruin grey, round which the ivy twines. Truly as well as eloquently has the poet said—

"The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve."

Our most cherished possessions must soon revert to others. It matters not how firmly we hold them; force, or fraud, or casualty, or imprudence, or disease, or death—one or other of these will wrench them from our reluctant grasp; and the question may be asked of us, as of the fool in the Gospel, "Then whose shall these things be?" If, then, we possessed the whole world, every instant we lived in it we should run the risk of losing it or leaving it, of being taken from it or having it snatched from us, of being compelled to give up the possession either by the open violence of enemies or the treacherous avarice of friends, by folly on our part or dishonesty on that of others, by some sudden reverse of fortune or by some sad dispensation of providence.

IV. THE ENJOYMENT OF IT IMPOSSIBLE. Further, if we had the whole world in actual possession, and were able to retain it in inalienable and never-failing proprietorship, still we could not enjoy it all. With all the progress of modern times, with all the advances of science, with all the forward strides of this nineteenth century, with all that geological research and chemical analysis and botanical skill have discovered, there are still many plants and many substances of which we know not the nature, or at least have not yet learned the use. So long as the properties of any object remain unknown,

it is manifest that that object itself cannot be enjoyed. And even if we knew all the qualities of every fowl of heaven, of every fish of the sea, of every plant that grows on the surface and of every mineral that is buried in the bowels of the earth, yet what use could any one individual make of them all? What a small portion of them would meet all the real necessities of life! How few of them would suffice for man's limited powers of enjoyment! How few of them would supply a substantial answer to that wide question, "What shall I eat, or what shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed?" If the cattle on a thousand hills were ours, if all the mineral wealth of the world were our own, if earth and all its store of gold and silver and precious stones were at our feet, if earth with all its fruits and flowers, its animal and vegetable productions, were at our disposal, what could one individual, possessing limited powers and capacities, do with them all? How could he enjoy them? Where would he store them that they might be safe? What, in a word, would they really profit him? Ah! how forcibly is the whole expressed in the simple lines!—

"Man needs but little here below,
Nor needs that little long."

V. THE UNSATISFACTORY NATURE OF IT. The world, if we possessed it all, and could retain it always, and enjoy it fully, would not satisfy us. We all know the possibility of being as much or more disappointed in a thing, as inconvenienced by being disappointed of it. Hope has its pleasures, and they are frequently as great, sometimes far greater than those of enjoyment. The poet, when he wrote of "the pleasures of hope," knew well that hope was one main source of human enjoyment. But in the supposed possession of the whole world that source of enjoyment would be cut off, as in that case man would have nothing to hope for. The distance, that lent its enchantment to the view, would be annihilated; desire would still be unsatisfied, and yet hope would be at an end. Besides, where is the rich man who is perfectly satisfied with his wealth, and who feels that it is a sufficient source of happiness? Where is the man of pleasure who can truly say that his pleasures have been without alloy? Where the ambitious aspirant who is not in feverish dread of the fickleness of popular favour? Where the heart that has not yearned for more than earth can furnish? Who has not felt that "aching void" which "the world can never fill"? It is not in the increase of riches, nor in the accession of honours, nor in any augmentation of creature enjoyments, that true satisfaction is to be found: the wealth of this world cannot purchase it; the pleasures of sense and sin cannot procure it; honours bestowed by fellow-creatures cannot confer it. Nor yet do we mean to decry the importance of temporal things. We know that they can minister much to man; they can add to our convenience and comfort; they can furnish their quota to our enjoyment; they can supply enlarged means of usefulness; they can contribute to the decency and dignity of life; they can shield us from the distresses, and difficulties, and discomforts of poverty. But we deny altogether that they can prevent or remove the vanity and vexation of spirit that are inseparably associated with all worldly things. In the midst of all that this world can furnish men have been heard to cry out, if not in words, at least in the sentiments of the patriarch, "I would not live alway." When this is the way with the prosperous worldling, often too has the child of God, amid the perplexities of life, cause to repeat the saying—

"I would not live alway; I ask not to stay
Where storm after storm rises dark o'er the way.
The few fleeting mornings that dawn on us here
Are enough for life's sorrows, enough for its cheer.

"Who—who would live alway, away from his God;
Away from yon heaven, that blissful abode,
Where rivers of pleasure flow o'er the bright plains,
And the noontide of glory eternally reigns?"

VI. SPIRITUAL LOSS. 1. *Practical bearing of all this.* What, it may be asked, is the practical lesson from all this? It is to lead us to God as the end, and to Christ as the way to the Father; to show us the value of salvation, the importance of eternal

things; to make us alive to the things of God; and, above all, to impress on us the worth of the soul and spiritual life. We have seen that if a man could possess the whole world he might still be unhappy—ay, perfectly miserable; fears harassing him, conscience tormenting him, afflictions overwhelming him, death overtaking him, and his worldly all departing from him amid “the swellings of Jordan.” But in general men stop far short of what has been thus supposed. They are willing to lose the soul for infinitely less than the world: at all events, a small thing takes the place of all the world to the sinner, and is made the means of his losing the soul. Thus, to the drunkard, the indulgence of his passion for strong drink is the horizon that bounds the world of his happiness and of his hopes; while to gain his object he submits to the loss of his soul. So with the licentious; the gratification of their low lust is all the world to them, and to it they sacrifice the soul. “Avoid,” says the apostle, “youthful lusts, that war against the soul.” So with the ambitious; the attainment of the object on which their heart is set is their world of gratification, and, for the sake of it, they will not only run the risk of losing the soul, but rush upon sure destruction. We might enumerate many and various classes of sinners—the horse-racer, the gamster, the blasphemer, the liar, the murderer—all ruining their own soul for the sake of questionable pleasures; at all events, pleasures that last but for a season, and that perish in the using. With sinners of every grade the indulgence of sin is their world of gratification, their all of wretched happiness, for which they are every day throwing away their chances of salvation and deliberately damning their own soul. Oh, what fearful folly! What unspeakable madness! Oh, may we not with propriety appeal to that sinful man, to whatever category or class his sin belongs, and with all the earnestness of our nature plead with him to spare his own soul? Should we not urge him, with all the powers of persuasion we can possibly command, to part with his vice at once and for ever, rather than plunge his soul into a hell of eternal misery? 2. *Exegetical note.* (1) The word θέλω is not “will” of future time, but “will” connected with choice or purpose. It is correctly rendered “would” in the Revised Version. The word is also distinguished from βούλομαι, which expresses a wish—mere willingness or inclination. Homer employs the latter for the former in the case of the gods, for with them *wish* is *will*. Thus the meaning is, “Whosoever may will [or choose] to save his life;” while in the next clause it is taken for granted that no one, of his own free will and choice, would desire to lose it, and therefore the expression is different, being literally, *Whosoever shall (as a matter of fact) destroy (ἀπολέσει) his life.* (2) The word ψυχή is the bond of union between the body and the spirit in the triple trichotomy of “body, soul, and spirit” (1 Thess. v. 23). Viewed in connection with the body, it is the natural or animal life, but in its relation to the spirit it is the spiritual or higher life. Thus in one sense it is less than what we understand by soul, and in another sense it is more, comprehending not only the immortal life of the soul, but the never-ending life of soul and body when reunited. (3) Ζημιώθη denotes forfeiture, and so it is correctly rendered in the Revised Version “forfeit;” while ἀντάλλαγμα (from the roots ἀντί, instead of, and ἄλλος, another) denotes one thing given in exchange for another, and so an equivalent or ransom, the idea being that if a man have lost, by way of mulct or forfeiture, his life or soul, what ransom will he be able to give in order to buy it back or redeem it? The expression in St. Luke is, “What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and destroy himself” or “suffer forfeit?” 3. *A celebrated choice.* The fabled choice of Hercules has at least a useful moral. Two ladies of gigantic stature—one graceful and modest, with raiment white as snow, the other florid and affected; the former called Virtue, the latter Pleasure, though self-named Happiness, approached the youthful hero. The latter promised him the possession of all pleasures, and that his path in life would be strewn with flowers, if he chose to follow her, reminding him at the same time that the path of virtue was tedious and thorny; the former promised to make his name glorious to posterity, and introduce him at death into the society of the gods, reminding him that the pleasures of the senses are the enjoyments of the brute, and that true pleasure springs from virtuous conduct. The hero, as the fable goes, did not long hesitate, but, giving his hand to Virtue, bade her be his guide, saying, “Lead on, and I will follow you.”

VII. THE VALUE OF THE SOUL, OR EVERLASTING LIFE. 1. *Value of the soul variously estimated.* We may estimate the value of the soul in several ways; we may enumerate

four of these as the most obvious. We may estimate it by the infinite price paid for it, by the immensity of its capacities, by its intrinsic worth, and by the immortality of its being. 2. *The price paid.* The price paid for the soul was a precious ransom price, "for the redemption of the soul is precious." That price was not "corruptible things, as silver and gold," but "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." In him we have "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." On account of the soul Christ died; on account of the soul the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, is at work; on account of the soul the Word of God is given, the gospel is preached, and "the arm of the Lord revealed." Thus, from the pains God takes to save the soul, from the power the Spirit exerts to sanctify the soul, from the efforts Satan makes to destroy the soul, as well as from the blood which Christ shed to redeem the soul, we may infer the value of the human soul, and consequently infer the exceeding greatness of its loss. 3. *Its intrinsic worth.* Again, we think of its intrinsic worth. It is a scintillation of Deity; it is the breath of the Almighty; it is the candle of the Lord in man. "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." It was at its creation the image of its Maker as well as the masterpiece of his workmanship; it was stamped with the likeness of the Eternal. And though the superscription is sadly defaced by sin, it is an infinite spirit still, and the direct offspring of the Father of spirits. 4. *Its immense capacities.* When we reflect on its great capacities, we bethink ourselves of its capability of suffering, which is immense. No pain of body is to be compared with the unspeakable anguish of the soul. There is, on the other hand, no pleasure of bodily organization to be compared with the intensely thrilling joyousness of the soul, when it delights itself in God, or meditates on his Word and works, or soars aloft in high and holy contemplation. Even a worldly poet, speaking of the happiness of thought, says, "I have oft been happy thinking." Besides, there is its wonderful power of development. The little that the lower animals possess is soon perfected; instinct flows in at once. The mind of man contains in itself the elements of almost unlimited improvement. As long as life lasts, accessions may be made to our knowledge, additions made to our attainments, new discoveries made in science, fresh advances in art. Better still, it is the very prerogative of the soul, as it is the very purpose for which its powers were bestowed, to glorify God on earth and be glorified with him in heaven, to enjoy him both here and hereafter, to see him and serve him, to hold converse with angels and glorified spirits, to have fellowship with Father, Son, and Spirit, to drink deep of the fountain of grace and love that wells up beside the throne of the Eternal. 5. *The immortality of its being.* Add to all this the immortality of its being. It is an immortal spirit; it is a flame that can never be extinguished; it is a light that can never be put out; it is unseen, but eternal. The babe that is only a span long has a soul that will outlive this world. In the bosom of that babe, as it sleeps in the cradle, or hangs on the breast, is a soul that will last longer than sun and moon endure. When the elements shall melt with fervent heat, when the earth shall be burnt up, and the heavens rolled together like a crumpled scroll, that soul shall survive, and remain unhurt amid "the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds." Not so the body. 6. *The shroud of Saladin.* Who has not heard, or rather read, of that famous Asiatic warrior, Saladin? After subjugating Egypt, establishing himself as Sultan of Egypt and Syria, taking towns without number, and retaking Jerusalem itself from the hands of the Crusaders, this Moslem hero of the Third Crusade, and beau-ideal of mediæval chivalry, had at length to yield to a still mightier conqueror. A few moments before he breathed his last, he ordered a herald to suspend on the point of a lance the shroud in which he was to be buried, and to cry as he raised it, "Look, here is all that Saladin the Great, the conqueror, the emperor, bears away with him of all his glory." Thus all the honours and riches of this world, all bodily pleasures and gratifications, all earthly greatness, are reduced by death to the shroud and the winding-sheet; but the soul, immortal in its nature, and secure in its existence, "smiles at the drawn dagger" or other implement of death. From all these considerations may be inferred the immeasurable loss of the soul; for—

"What is the thing of greatest price,

The whole creation round?

That which was lost in Paradise,

That which in Christ is found.

“The soul of man, Jehovah's breath,
It keeps two worlds in strife;
Hell works beneath its work of death,
Heaven stoops to give it life.”

7. The full force of the question. What, then, we may repeat, shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world—and yet all the gain any man can expect is infinitely less than that—and lose his own soul or higher heavenly life? What shall it profit him, if he shall make a little sordid gain, but lose his soul? What shall it profit him, if he shall indulge some degrading passion, and thereby lose his soul? What shall it profit him, if he gratify some vile lust, and by it lose his soul? What shall it profit him, if he swallow a few more intoxicating draughts, and in the end lose his soul? What shall it profit him, if he gratify a few more lusts of the flesh, and lose his own soul? What shall it profit him, if he enjoy a little longer the society of evil companions, or even the smile and favour of the great ones of the earth, and lose his soul? What will it profit him, if he have a few more pleasures of any kind—pleasures that last so short a space, and satisfy so very little while they do last—and in lieu of them lose his own soul? Who is not, on due reflection, prepared to answer any such questions with the strongest negative? The angels in heaven, and the spirits of the just made perfect that are already there, if asked the same question, would declare, in tones of loudest earnestness and solemn emphasis, “Nothing, nothing!” Lost souls in hell, if malice prevented not, would assert the same. God the Father, who sent his Son to save the soul; God the Son, who suffered on the cross to redeem it; God the Spirit, who came to sanctify it; the Almighty undivided Three in One, would answer their own question in this passage by a negative that neither man nor angel, fallen nor unfallen, would gainsay, and that would wake an echo both in heaven above and in earth or hell beneath.

VIII. EXTENT OF THE LOSS. 1. *This is an entire loss.* The loss in question is an entire and unqualified loss. When Francis I. lost the important battle of Pavia, he described it by saying, “We have lost all but honour.” And thus, though the disaster was overwhelming and the loss exceeding great, yet there was one qualifying circumstance—the preservation of honour intact and unsullied. Not so with the loss of the soul: there is nothing to qualify it, nothing to mitigate it. It is the loss of losses, the death of deaths—a catastrophe unequalled in extent, and unparalleled in its amount through all the universe of God. 2. *A loss without compensation.* The loss of the soul is a loss for which there is no compensation. The great fire of London consumed six hundred streets, thirteen thousand dwellings, and ninety churches, and destroyed property to the amount of seven and a half millions of pounds sterling. Yet that calamity was in some sort changed into a blessing; for the rebuilding of the city, in a superior style of architecture, and with more regard to sanitary arrangements, banished for ever the fearful plague which had previously made such havoc in that populous place. There is, besides, a well-known compensatory principle in the providence of God, so that, when a man loses his sight, the sense of hearing becomes more acute, and the perception of sounds more exact and accurate. The deaf mute, again, is said to have the sense of sight quickened; while the man both blind and dumb gains a more exquisite sense of touch. But the loss of the soul is a calamity for which there is nothing to compensate, and which nothing can countervail so as to make amends for it. 3. *The loss is irreparable.* Other losses may be repaired. The friend you love as your own soul may take an umbrage; he may misunderstand you, or you may be misrepresented to him;—

“Angry words will soon step in,
To spread the breach that words begin.”

But let a proper explanation be given, and his friendship may be regained; or, if he continue obstinate, other and even better friends may supply his place. You may lose your health; you may be like the poor woman who had suffered so much from, and expended so much on, physicians without any improvement; but, under the blessing of Providence on the skill of yet another physician and the use of proper medicines, or by the intervention of the great Physician apart from any means, or when all means have failed, you may regain that inestimable blessing. You may lose your property,

like Job when his cattle were lost, and when his children had perished, and want had come in like an armed man; yet, by years of patient industry and steady perseverance, under the Divine blessing, you may, like that same patriarch, gain double of all you lost. But oh! there is no reparation for the loss of the soul; that loss can never be retrieved, and can never be recalled. When Sir Isaac Newton had lost some most important and complicated calculations, the result of years of patient thought and investigation, by the burning of his papers, the loss to him was immense; and yet, with patience equal to his genius, he could say to the favourite animal that caused it, "Diamond, Diamond, thou little knowest the labour thou hast cost me!" But what is the loss even of years of patient philosophic investigation and profound mathematical research compared with the loss of a human soul, capable of conducting, in some degree, similar investigations, and of repeating and repairing, in case of loss, those investigations? 4. "*Cast away.*" This is the expression in the parallel passage of St. Luke. Though it may serve in exposition, it is not quite exact. The word *ἀποβάλλεις* has rather the signification of having *incurred a forfeiture*; but, in sooth, a fearful forfeiture—a forfeiture that involves the fate of being cast away into that "blackness of darkness," unrelieved by any starlight of hope or sunshine of promise, and where no rainbow of mercy ever spans the sky. The heathen, without any proper notion of a future state, shrank from the death of the body, because they were then deprived forever of the light of day. "There is a magnificent fulness of life," says Bulwer, "in those children of the beautiful Hellas. They ever bid a last lingering and half-reluctant farewell to the sun. The orb which animated their temperate sky, which ripened their fertile fields, in which they saw the type of eternal youth, of surpassing beauty and incarnate poetry—human in its associations, yet divine in its nature—is equally beloved and equally to be mourned by the maiden tenderness of the Lartine or the sullen majesty of the hero. The sun was to them a familiar friend. The terror of the nether world lay in the thought that its fields are sunless." Oh, what shall we, to whom futurity has been revealed, then say of the second death, when the lost soul is cast away, through a fatal forfeiture of the light of heaven, into that sunless region where the "blackness of darkness" ever reigns, where it is consigned to the companionship of devils and the damned, where it sinks deeper and deeper into the bottomless abyss of misery, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched"?—J. J. G.

